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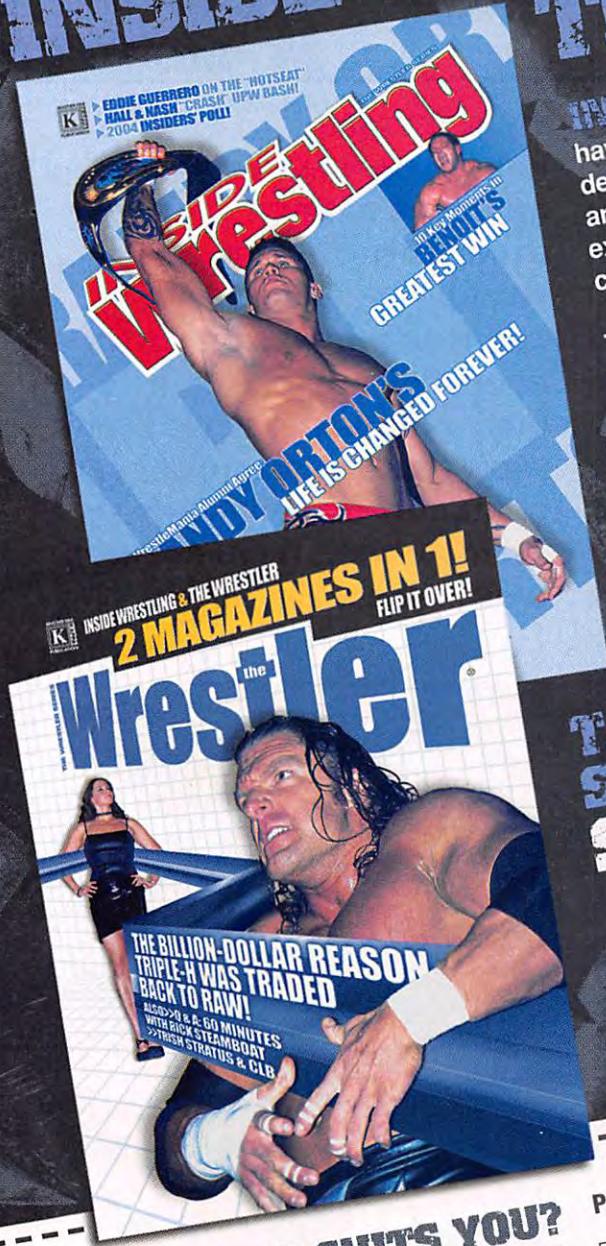
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have been a vital part of your wrestling library for three decades. While the content and format of the magazines are very different, both magazines are known for their exciting brand of wrestling journalism, insightful columns, and dazzling ringside photography.

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Volume 2, 2005

DEPARTMENTS

IN THE FIRST combined issue of **THE WRESTLER** and *Inside Wrestling*, published six months ago, we at London Publishing compared ourselves to McDonald's. A head-scratching comparison for sure, but we thought it made sense in that we were doing the opposite of the fast food giant in one respect. At a time when Mickey D's was withdrawing the "super size" option on its meals in the hope that people would end up a little healthier, we were fattening up two of our magazines. Okay, not exactly. Twice a year, we were putting two of them together into one super-sized magazine extravaganza.

Perhaps we ought to stick to wrestling analogies this time. Look at these twice-yearly megamagazines as the WrestleMania and SummerSlam of our publishing calendar. Or the Royal Rumble and Survivor Series. Or WrestleMania and Survivor Series. You get the idea. Whereas WWE gathers both of its rosters together for four special PPVs each year, we choose to make our special events a little more special. Four regulation-sized issues of each and two of these monster issues each year.

We know a lot of you have been critical of WWE for continuing with the brand extension and would like to see the Raw and Smackdown rosters permanently recombined. That's because you only see half of your favorite stars on Monday nights and the other half on Thursday nights ... and half on the Raw PPVs and the other half on the Smackdown PPVs. Valid points for sure. But judging from the feedback we got on the first combined issue of *TW* and *INW*, you do like this bold new adventure we are taking you on. Maybe that's because we don't cover only Raw in *Inside Wrestling* and only Smackdown in **THE WRESTLER**, or vice versa. You get a lot of both in each regular issue of **THE WRESTLER** and each regular issue of *Inside Wrestling*, not to mention healthy doses of TNA, the independents, and international wrestling.

When we put it all together twice a year, you're simply getting more of all that great stuff spread throughout the 164 pages, in addition to all of your favorite *TW* and *INW* columns and departments.

So we hope you enjoy the second combined issue of **THE WRESTLER** and *Inside Wrestling*, even if you don't get fries with it.

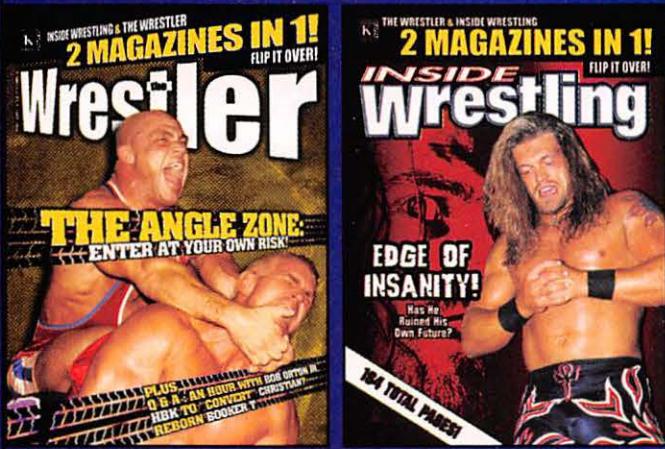
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by Gary Dineen

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Greg Stevens

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Edge by Scott Romer

COVER DESIGN:
Jim Malloy



Look for the April 2005 issue of **THE WRESTLER** on sale January 18, 2005

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In case you're wondering, "Cowboy" Bob doesn't mind being known as "Randy Orton's father." In this candid 60-minute interview, he discusses his son's amazing ascent to the top of WWE, as well as his own remarkable career in the federation and elsewhere. He also reveals what it was like for him to grow up as the son of a famous wrestler, what he's doing now, and much, much more

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That trade from Raw isn't looking so bad to him now

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Yet another star taken away from us far too early

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With his bad neck, he's not fooling around any longer



your letters



The death of Ray Traylor hit a lot of wrestling fans hard, including Johnny Sharkton, who fondly remembers him as Big Bubba Rogers in the NWA and UWF.

ALWAYS THE BOSS

I was sad to hear about the death of Ray Traylor a few weeks back. He was a smooth competitor, much faster than he appeared to be, and he had great endurance for a big man.

His main event run against Hulk Hogan in the WWF in the late-1980s was great, marked by an awesome cage match in which the "Hulkster" superplexed the Bossman off the top of the cage (yes, Hulk Hogan did that!). I will also always remember Traylor for his time in the UWF and the NWA as Big Bubba Rogers. His matches with Ronnie Garvin and One Man Gang were legendary.

To the Traylor family, I offer my heartfelt condolences. And to Ray Traylor, I offer my thanks—you made us all smile.

JOHNNY SHARKTON
Columbus, OH

RAW IS EVOLUTION

I used to like Evolution. It reminded me of the old Four Horsemen. But like The Four Horsemen did many years ago, Evolution is now getting old. I used to get bored watching NWA wrestling and seeing every combination of the Horsemen against every combination of the top good guys. Well, now it is 2004, and it seems like every Monday night, we are subjected to a six-man tag team match involving the members of Evolution and any combination of Chris Benoit, Chris Jericho, Edge, Shawn Michaels, Randy Orton, Shelton Benjamin, Eugene, etc. I like a good six-man tag match as much as the next guy, but isn't this called overkill?

There should be room at the top of the Raw roster for some new main event villains. I think Christian has really come into his own lately and

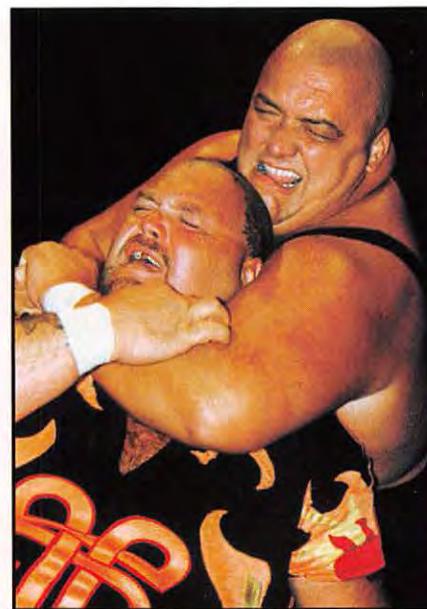
could easily move up, Kane (while also getting a *little* stale) is still a feasible top guy, and Edge finally seems primed for a strong run as a bad guy. Evolution was a cool idea that worked well for a long time, but it's time to move on. Ric Flair needs one final good run as a hero, Batista needs time on his own, and Triple-H needs to make a stand as the Raw champion on his own.

DAVID MILLER
Vernon Hills, IL

MISS THE BEHEMOTHS

I might be in the minority, but I miss seeing some of the old school big boys wrestle each other. I mean guys like King Kong Bundy, Bam Bam Bigelow, Vader, One Man Gang, and Kamala. No, these guys weren't technical masters, but they did add an interesting element to wrestling.

I always thought it was fun to pit a



There aren't enough big man vs. big man battles in wrestling today for Harris Brady's tastes. Anyone else hankering for another King Kong Bundy-Bam Bam Bigelow feud?

smaller opponent against one of these behemoths. Either the big guy would squash the small guy or the small guy would overcome the odds and win in exciting David and Goliath fashion.

Now the only real giants around are The Big Show and, to a certain extent, Kane and The Undertaker. The problem is that these guys don't have anyone else with whom they can compete in a real battle of the giants. How many times can we watch The Big Show lose to guys smaller than him until we start believing he's not that good?

I'd love to see a guy like Rosey get rid of the superhero gimmick and become a real monster. Sometimes bigger is better.

HARRIS BRADY
Berkeley, CA

THE FULL MONTY

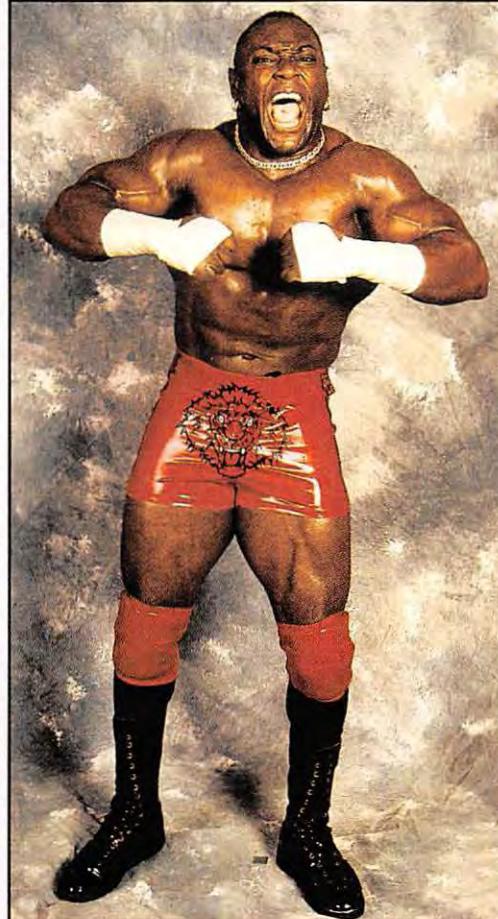
Monty Brown is no joke. I was really impressed when he defeated Raven to advance in the mini-TNA tournament to determine a new number-one contender to the NWA heavyweight title this October. I don't know how many people in TNA will be able to beat this guy. And to think his career is really just getting started. How good will he be a year or two from now!

"The Alpha Male" was able to handle D-Lo Brown and former NWA heavyweight champion Ron Killings without much trouble already. I don't think he would have a hard time against Jeff Jarrett, either. I'm pulling for Monty to make it really big. I think he has what it takes to be a dominant champion, something wrestling so desperately needs.

TOM STEVENSON
Ozone Park, NY

(TOO) TABOO TUESDAY

I liked the idea for Taboo Tuesday and decided to order it. I also decided to vote for Chris Benoit to face Triple-H, a submission match between



TNA's Monty Brown has really impressed reader Tom Stevenson a lot in a short time. He sees an NWA title in Brown's future.

Randy Orton and Ric Flair, and The Hurricane to face Chris Jericho.

But I have to admit, I didn't like the concept behind the battle royal involving the ladies. Picking what type of clothes they are going to wear? Isn't this just one step above pornography?

I was just starting to get into the women's division, but this idea was just weak. I know people say just turn it off if you don't want to watch, but what are parents supposed to do when they take their kids to the arena? It's just not right.

I'm a wrestling fan, so I continue to watch, but I don't always feel good about it.

GERALD TRAINER
Margate City, NJ

HE CAN'T BE SERIOUS

I've been mildly paying attention to the drama building in Ring of Honor involving Ricky Steamboat and Mick

(Continued on page 75)

The Wrestler

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what's happening?

By Dan Murphy

TABOO TUESDAY MIGHT or might not have signaled the beginning of an interactive era for pro wrestling, but the special Tuesday pay-per-view did mark the end of one era for WWE, as **Pat Patterson** walked away from wrestling after 46 years in the sport.

For the past few decades, Patterson had served as one of **Vince McMahon's** top advisers and assistants. Through his long career in the business, Patterson earned a reputation as a ring general and has been widely considered one of WWE's most valuable back-

stage resources for his creative input, overall wrestling knowledge, and ability to mentor other wrestlers.

Patterson's decision to retire reportedly came after a highly publicized disagreement between Patterson and the WWE chairman. Sources indicate that McMahon had asked Patterson to travel with the Raw crew and offer his suggestions to help that brand improve its attendance and television ratings. Among Patterson's opinions was that the Raw brand had been putting too much emphasis on **Triple-H** and that it needed to create other top stars in addition to McMahon's son-in-law.

Patterson's assessment had created a tense situation backstage, and a few weeks later, he announced his retirement. While Patterson's critique of Triple-H and the ensuing fallout has been cited as the reason for his retirement, neither party has commented publicly on it, and many believe Patterson was on the verge of retirement anyway. Following the Taboo Tuesday PPV, McMahon came to the ring and congratulated Patterson for his years of service to the company. Patterson thanked the fans and sang "My Way," before leaving the ring as both **Stephanie** and **Shane McMahon** held the ropes open for him.

An accomplished wrestler in his own right, Patterson became the WWF's first Intercontinental champion in 1979. His famous April 1981 boot camp match against **Sgt. Slaughter** was considered one of the top matches of the 1980s. In addition to working for the WWF in a backstage capacity and as a TV commentator in the 1980s following his retirement from



Although Pat Patterson's decision to retire from WWE was said to be the result of a disagreement over the push of Triple-H, he left the company with a smile on his face and a song in his heart after Taboo Tuesday.



The strange saga of Evolution got a little stranger and more confusing at Taboo Tuesday. Blood enemies Ric Flair and Randy Orton actually hugged after Orton took out yet another legend. It didn't make a lot of sense.

in-ring competition, Patterson received an on-air role with **Gerald Brisco** as one of McMahon's bumbling stooges in the late-1990s. In reality, he was anything but a stooge.

As far as what's happening inside the ring, **Randy Orton** took another step toward becoming WWE's top torchbearer by beating **Ric Flair** in a cage match at Taboo Tuesday. Flair came into the match with incredible intensity after Orton's appearance on ABC's late-night talk show, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*. Kimmel repeatedly called Flair an "old man," and insinuated that Orton would humiliate Flair at the pay-per-view. Those comments came on the heels of Orton's own remarks in which he said Flair was ruining his own legacy by becoming Triple-H's "lapdog."

Following the match, Flair shook Orton's hand and hugged him in a sign of respect, and now Orton can add Flair's name to the list of legends he has taken out.

"I don't know that I like him, but he beat me clean in the middle of the ring," Flair said. "He beat 'The Man.' I can't deny that."

The night before Taboo Tuesday, **Shawn Michaels** suffered a torn meniscus in his knee during a

three-way match against **Edge** and **Chris Benoit**. Even with the injury, Michaels wrestled a strong match against HHH at Taboo Tuesday, but came up short after Edge interfered and speared him. He underwent surgery just before press time, but the amount of time he will miss wasn't known as of this writing.

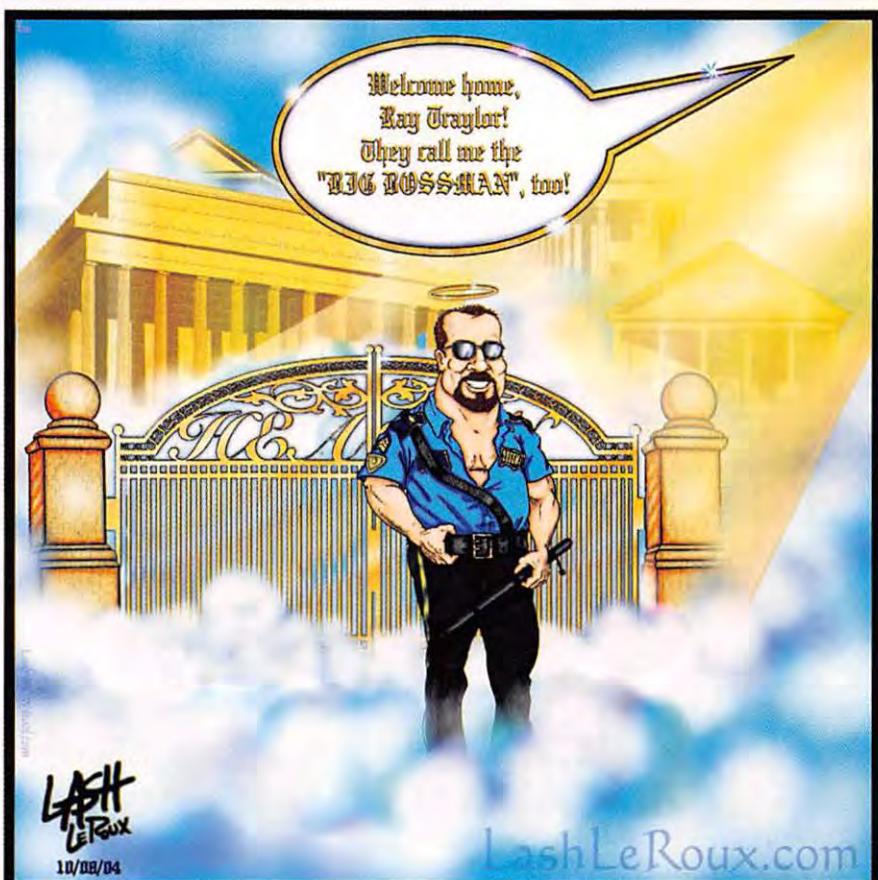
The big Smackdown news is that **John Bradshaw Layfield** has a new challenge in the form of **Booker T**. Booker turned against the Smackdown titleholder during a six-man tag match on *Smackdown* in October, and now the five-time WCW champion is looking to add the Smackdown title to his championship resume.

"I never wanted to be sent from Raw to Smackdown, but I might as

(Continued on page 76)

"LASHING OUT!"

By Lash LeRoux





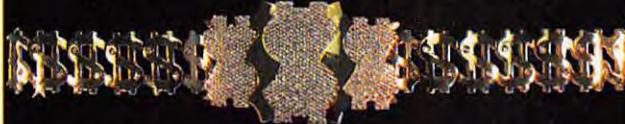
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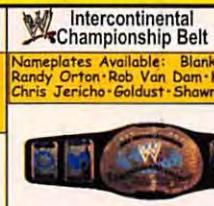
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Booker T (studio shot) (WWEP001)
Brock Lesnar (holding Kurt Angle) (WWEP003)
Brock Lesnar (studio shot) (WWEP002)
Goldberg (studio shot) (WWEP005)
Chris Jericho (stretching Michaels) (WWEP004)
Shawn Michaels (slamming Jericho) (WWEP012)
Shawn Michaels (studio shot) (WWEP013)
Kevin Nash (studio shot) (WWEP009)
Sable (studio shot) (WWEP011)
Stacy Keibler (studio shot) (WWEP014)
Torrie Wilson (studio shot) (WWEP016)
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Kane (studio shot) (WWEP006)
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Rey Mysterio (arms crossed) (WWEP020)
Sable (laying down flat) (WWEP021)
Steve Austin (with vest) (WWEP024)
Ric Flair (in robe) (WWEP025)
Steve Austin (pointing) (WWEP026)
Sable (in bikini) (WWEP027)
Goldberg (slamming Steven Richards) (WWEP028)
Shawn Michaels (slamming Ric Flair) (WWEP029)
Chris Jericho (with vest) (WWEP031)
Gail Kim (studio shot) (WWEP032)
The Rock (doing Sharpshooter) (WWEP033)
Undertaker (black vest) (WWEP034)
Undertaker (falling on John Cena) (WWEP035)



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Key Chains

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With Will Welsh

FOR MAYBE THE first time in his athletic life, Brock Lesnar didn't accomplish what he set out to accomplish. He gave it his all and devoted himself to becoming the best defensive lineman he could be, but his impressive athletic skills weren't able to overcome the huge learning deficit that was created by years of wrestling instead of playing organized football. The Minnesota Vikings made him one of the team's last cuts late this summer, and then Lesnar's dream was seemingly snuffed out when he failed to even make the organization's practice squad.

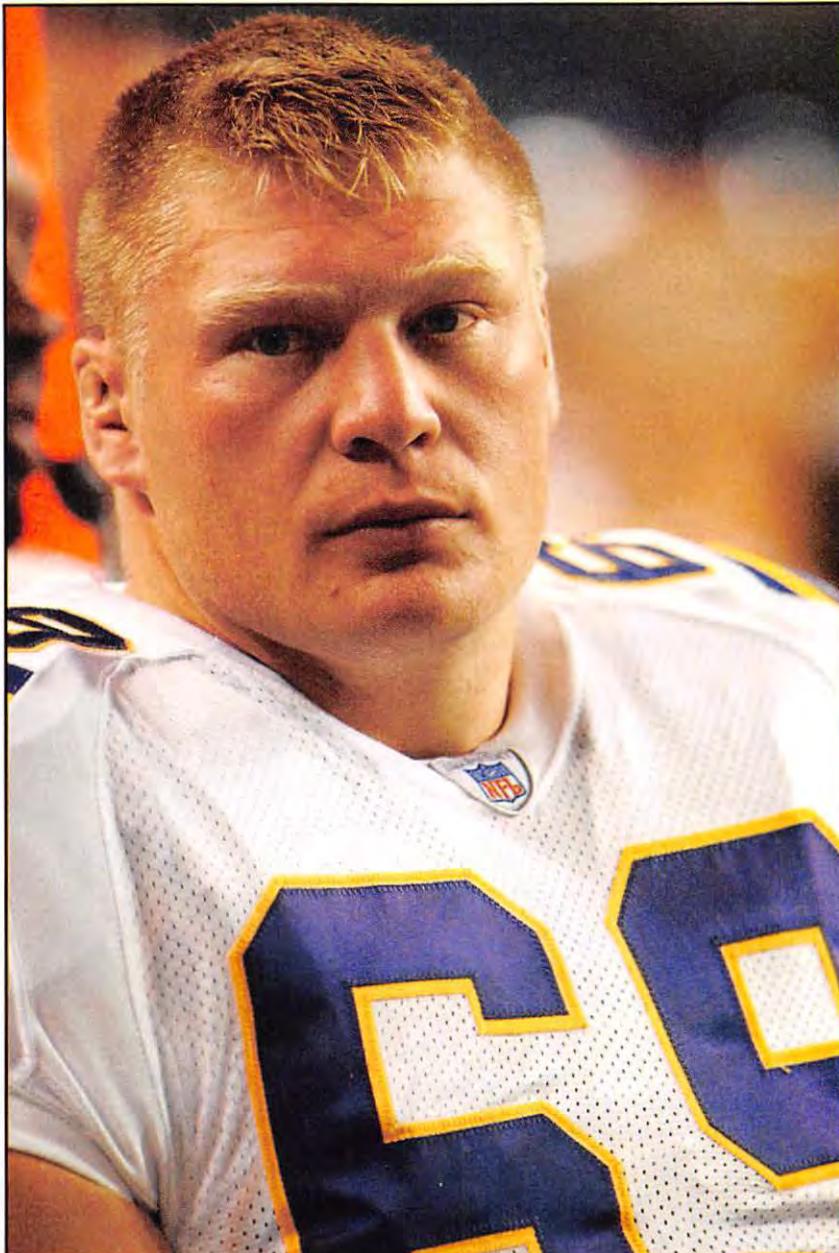
The NFL's "Next Big Thing" wasn't a complete flop, though. He actually performed better than most experts predicted. Many of his teammates distanced themselves from him at first, skeptical of the powerful but unproven former WWE champion. However, his drive to soak up as much knowledge as possible impressed them more than they originally thought it would. It didn't take long for him to shed his outsider image, and his jersey quickly became one of the team's top sellers. (Even though he was released in August, Lesnar's jersey remained the featured item of the team's Internet shopping site as late as week three of the NFL regular season.)

By the time the Vikings pulled the plug on him, he had earned the respect of his fellow players and even their admiration. Players and assistant coaches were quoted as saying that he was one of the hardest workers on the roster. Vikings head coach Mike Tice has even said that Lesnar should stay in shape because it's likely that he'll be brought back and signed to the practice squad at some point during this NFL season.

Sure, it sounds like the kind of promise that parents make to their little children in order to keep them in line ("Come on, Brock, we have to go. But I promise we'll come back to the zoo a few months from now, okay?"), but Tice is a respected football coach. He's played the game, and he knows what it's like to have a coach tug

emotional strings. He doesn't seem the sort to go on local radio and lie about a player's future just because he took a liking to him. Tice is a straight shooter, and if he says that Lesnar has a chance to rejoin the practice squad later this year, I believe him.

Now, however, Lesnar is left with a choice. He can



Brock Lesnar's quest to make it in the NFL didn't necessarily come to an end when he was left off the Vikings' practice squad, but it was dealt a major setback. It'll be interesting to see if he perseveres ... or gives up.

Photo by Scott Cunningham/Getty Images

continue to pursue his football dreams by staying at home and keeping in top physical condition in hopes that he'll rejoin the practice squad. If that doesn't pan out, he'll still have the opportunity to catch on with a team in NFL Europe. He has already ruled out playing in the Canadian Football League.

Yes, Lesnar's chances of making an NFL roster are still slim, but they're definitely still alive. If he continues this pursuit, he may not be making the kind of money that he got accustomed to earning as WWE champion, but he won't be starving, either.

Of course, Lesnar can also drop his head and ask Vince McMahon for his old job back, and he has already hinted that he thinks his relationship with the WWE chairman is still a good one. For all the bad blood between the promotion and Lesnar over the way Lesnar left, there's no doubt that McMahon relishes the sound of "Brock Lesnar, WWE champion." It's simply not possible for McMahon to look at a talent like Lesnar and tell him, "No, we don't need you and we don't want you. Have fun with that pigskin experiment." (Don't forget, McMahon once failed a pigskin experiment of his own.) Lesnar's presence on the Smackdown roster could turn Smackdown's future around and provide a quick band-aid for many of the brand's ills.

Lesnar, however, would be walking back into a hostile environment. While his fellow wrestlers would welcome his presence because he'd undoubtedly help sell more tickets and pay-per-views, his moody personality made him one of the less popular members of the locker room during his first run with the company. If he returns, he's sure to be even less popular backstage, especially because WWE management wouldn't have any choice but to promote him as one of Smackdown's top two or three stars, over wrestlers who have proven just how dedicated they are to the cause.

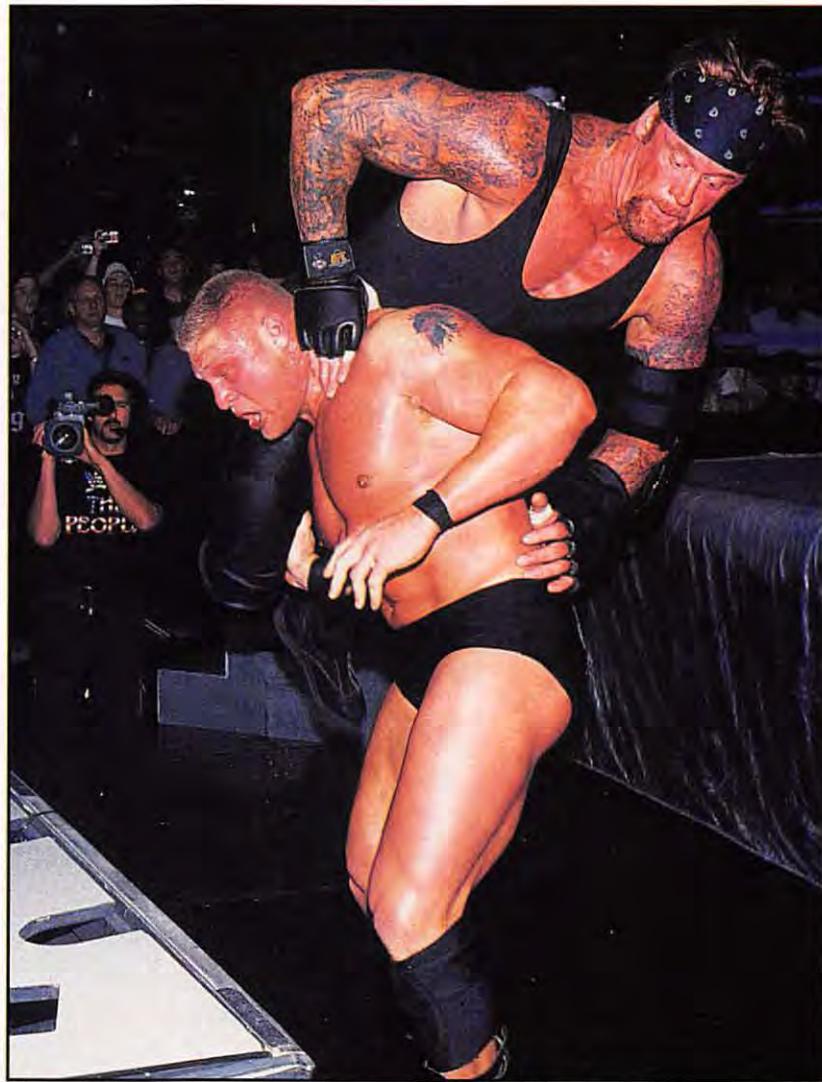
In order for Lesnar to transition back into WWE successfully, he'd have to prove himself worthy of such a push. Smackdown wrestlers would want to know that he's committed to WWE and wasn't just going to earn a nice WrestleMania paycheck before leaving again for Vikings mini-camp. They'd want to know that he wouldn't abandon them so hastily a second time.

Lesnar might not be able to promise them that. He left WWE after WrestleMania because he was unhappy with the amount of travel the WWE schedule necessitated and because he missed the competitive aspect that amateur wrestling had provided. He didn't leave because he wasn't making enough money or because he thought his

pay-per-view bonuses were smaller than they should be. He left because he didn't genuinely love pro wrestling, and thought he could be happier doing something else. Now that he's experienced a modicum of success outside WWE, I'll be curious to find out whether it's possible for pro wrestling to ever make him happy.

I'm sure that Vince McMahon is too, because if Lesnar is ever going to be the long-term wrestling superstar that he's capable of being, he's going to have to start enjoying himself. He's going to have to come to work with a smile on his face and a kind word for everyone around him. Eventually, he'll have to develop into a locker room leader whom everyone respects.

If Lesnar doesn't feel that he'll ever be able to become that kind of wrestler, I highly recommend that he stay away from the sport altogether. Coming back only to leave again will do him no good and will hurt WWE immensely. He's already shown admirable dedication to football. He should only come back to wrestling if he's ready to show that same kind of dedication to WWE. □



It would be easy for Lesnar to say he gave football his best shot and try to return to WWE, figuring it's simply his best career option right now. Will Welsh, however, suggests he stay away from wrestling unless he's convinced it can make him happy.

blindsided

By Harry Burkett

*"I've lived a life that's full.
I've traveled each and every highway;
And more, much more than this,
I did it my way."*

—Lyrics from "My Way"

PAT PATTERSON WANTED to leave WWE on a high note, and that's what he did on October 19—moments after Taboo Tuesday ended—when Vince McMahon asked his long-time employee to join him in the ring. McMahon asked the fans in Milwaukee to stay a few more minutes to pay respect to a man they "would never see in a WWE ring again." After Patterson emerged from the backstage area, McMahon announced the Hall of Famer would be retiring.

The next generation of McMahons, Shane and Stephanie, joined their father and the man who was very much like an uncle to them. At Vince's urging, Patterson—an avid karaoke singer—sang his rendition of Frank Sinatra's hit "My Way." The crowd gave Patterson a standing ovation, and Shane and Stephanie opened the ropes for him as he exited the ring for the final time.

It's hard to imagine any other wrestler closing out a 46-year career in that manner. When Patterson entered the business as a teenager, he never could have imagined that his career would endure so long or that he would be so close to the pinnacle of power. My earliest memory of the business is Vince McMahon introducing his broadcast partner, "wrestling great Pat Patterson," at the beginning of every *Championship Wrestling* program in the early-1980s. I never would have imagined that Patterson would remain such a vital part of the company for the next 22 years.

Patterson can be very proud of his accomplishments in the industry. He accumulated an impressive number of championships, including the WWF Intercontinental, WWF North American, AWA World tag team, Pacific Northwest, U.S. (San Francisco), and San Francisco tag team titles. During the 1960s and '70s, he and Ray Stevens were one of the most innovative tag teams to wrestle in Northern California and the Midwest.

Inside the squared circle, Patterson was a master of ring psychology, and that made him a natural for some of the hottest feuds of the era. Settling in the WWF in the late-1970s, he was involved in some of the most violent rivalries in company history. There were his brutal encounters with Ted DiBiase over the North American title, his steel cage match against WWF champion Bob Backlund, and his boot camp match with Sgt. Slaughter. There was the occasion when Ivan Koloff, taking offense at Patterson's color commentary, bloodied his



Regardless of the reason for his sudden retirement, Pat Patterson deserved the sendoff the McMahons gave him after Taboo Tuesday ended. If it wasn't for him, WWE might not be the empire it is today.

Patterson (shown against Ken Patera in 1980) was a terrific wrestler in the WWF and elsewhere in his heyday. His contributions after he retired from active competition should and will be his legacy, to insiders at least.



mouth with a hard slap. That led to Patterson's final run around the circuit in 1983, as he and Koloff feuded all over the Northeast.

By the mid-1980s, Patterson had settled comfortably into the behind-the-scenes role that became his most important contribution to the business: helping wrestlers plot their matches. He was a genius at accentuating a wrestler's strengths and hiding his weaknesses through drama and pacing. A perfect example is The Ultimate Warrior's win over Hulk Hogan for the WWF World title at WrestleMania VI. By all measures, a match between two musclebound fan favorites with little technical ability should have been a disaster. Thanks to Patterson's input, Warrior-Hogan became the most memorable match of the early-'90s, and perhaps the best performance of either man's career.

Patterson is also credited for developing the Royal Rumble concept. Drawing from experience gained in countless battle royals when they were the rage in California, Patterson figured out that having wrestlers enter the ring at two-minute intervals would keep the match exciting and maintain the suspense for a much longer amount of time. Too often, standard battle royals had become snoozefests with wrestlers milling about and walking around each other. It's a great testament to Patterson that the Rumble is still a highlight of the WWE calendar all these years later.

Remarkably, Patterson's instincts and ability became even more valuable as he grew older. Instead of falling out of touch with the times, Patterson helped define the content and raise the standards of WWE matches. From "Ironman" and ladder matches to "Hell In A Cell" and three-way matches, Patterson used his experience to make new concepts work. From Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart to The Rock vs. Hulk Hogan, Patterson made the most out of a variety of styles. The matches of the "Attitude" era, known for their unpredictability and youth appeal, were often the vision of a man nearly in his 60s.

Remember Patterson and Gerald Brisco as Mr. McMahon's coffee-fetching stooges? Or how Patterson stripped down to his Fruit of the Looms to give Rikishi a stinkface? While all of that was silly and tasteless, there's no doubt Patterson was in tune with the 18-to-24-year-old demographic at that time.

Yet Patterson does have a stain on his record. After being implicated in the sexual harassment scandal of the early-1990s, he was forced out of the company in disgrace. Once the media storm blew over, however, McMahon quietly rehired him. Whether McMahon believed Patterson was innocent of the charges, or was willing to overlook improprieties to get him back into the company, I can't say for sure. I do know that I've never heard a wrestler say a bad word about Patterson, and even the most disgruntled ex-employees have talked about him with respect. After a live edition of *Raw* on January 19, 2004, for example, a number of superstars gathered in the ring to celebrate Patterson's 63rd birthday. There was no indication that anyone was faking it for the crowd. The WWE family's affection for Patterson is unquestionably genuine.

That's what WWE has been for Patterson: a family. Without any children of his own, Patterson no doubt regards the McMahons—along with his fellow wrestlers and employees—as his sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters. Like any family, they've probably had their share of squabbles, but they've also come together to create an amazing phenomenon over the past 25 years.

Even now, a lot of people are speculating about the timing of Patterson's departure and whether his criticism of Triple-H's dominance of *Raw* had anything to do with it. I don't believe Patterson was forced out, because he has been too important to the company for too long. I'm sure he handled his retirement like everything else in his life.

I'm sure he did it his way. □

thumbs up



Thumbs Up to The Big Show. For the several years, Big Show seemed to be just going through the motions in the ring most of the time. He didn't seem very motivated, and it was showing in his matches. Something has stirred in him, though. Not only is he intensely focused on being the best wrestler he can be, he doesn't even let injury or the occasional humiliating loss to slow him down anymore. He's truly reverted back to the form that made him one of the sport's can't-miss prospects when he debuted in WCW nearly a decade ago. It's time that he starts to get the credit that he deserves.



Thumbs Up to Jeff Jarrett. Jarrett has rightfully taken a lot of abuse for some of his decision in running TNA. Now, however, it's time to give Jarrett a little recognition for doing something right. His decision to bring in The Outsiders—Scott Hall, Kevin Nash, and possibly Sean Waltman—while controversial, is the right thing for TNA in the short term as it tries to expand. Hall, Nash, and Waltman are major stars, and they'll shake up TNA's status quo immediately. The trio probably will introduce some problems, but Jarrett should be commended for taking the risk.

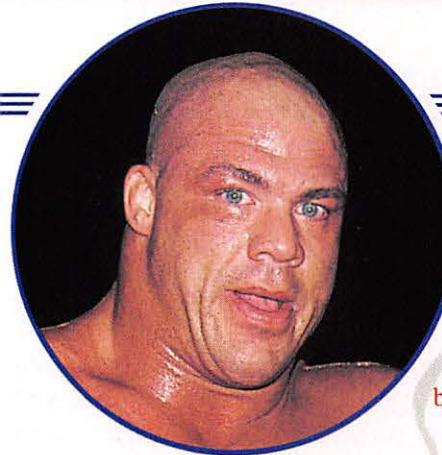


Thumbs Up to Samoa Joe. Joe has held the Ring of Honor championship since March 22, 2003, when he beat Xavier in Philadelphia. Since then, Joe has defended the title against such competitors as Homicide, C.M. Punk, Christopher Daniels, A.J. Styles, and "American Dragon" Bryan Danielson—and he's done so in fine fashion. He doesn't depend on outside interference, rulebreaking, or anything else to win his matches. All he relies on are his own skill and toughness, which are exemplary. He's not only a credit to ROH, he's a credit to the entire sport. He may be the best champion out there right now—ROH, WWE, or otherwise.

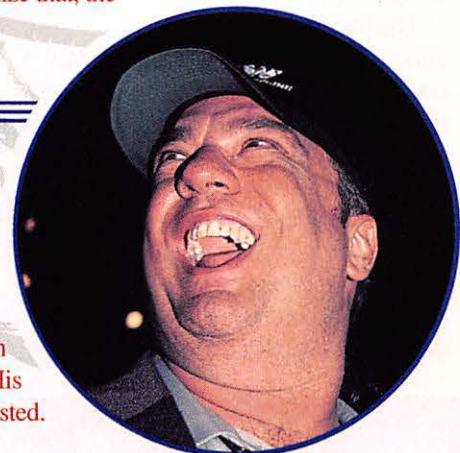


Thumbs Up to Shawn Michaels. When HBK returned to active wrestling in 2002, WWE officials had to be a little worried that he'd create chaos in the backstage area. It hasn't happened. Instead, Michaels has become something of a role model. While he still has that ol' HBK swagger—he wouldn't really be HBK without it, would he?—he's not playing political games or refusing to wrestle opponents with less name recognition. He's actually helping to create stars! Amazingly enough, the former bad boy is teaching a new generation of wrestlers what being a professional is all about.

thumbs down



Thumbs Down to Kurt Angle. Angle doesn't have friends in wrestling—he has associates. His two newest associates—Mark Jindrak and Luther Reigns—have plenty of talent, but they're wasting most of it by defending Angle and interfering in his matches. They allow Angle to bully them around and put them in harm's way because they think by aligning with him, he'll give their careers a much-needed huge boost. Unfortunately, he won't, because Angle is blatantly selfish. He doesn't care about them one iota. The quicker Jindrak and Reigns realize that, the better off they'll be.



Thumbs Down to Paul Heyman. Heyman has a reputation for being able to mold raw monsters and turn them into viable professional wrestlers. Remember what he did for Brock Lesnar only a few years ago? He helped transform Lesnar from an unfocused behemoth with a ton of natural ability into a cold, calculating warrior. Now he's trying to do the same for Heidenreich, and it seems to be working so far, which is unfortunate for Smackdown ... and for Heidenreich. Heyman used Lesnar, and he's trying to use Heidenreich. His motives are still unclear, but he's just not to be trusted.



Thumbs Down to Scott D'Amore. Wrestling has long been filled with despicable managers, but TNA's D'Amore is really starting to irritate us. As the leader of Team Canada—which consists of Petey Williams, Eric Young, Bobby Rude, and Johnny Devine—he's using the good Canadian name to his advantage by calling talented Canadian wrestlers to his side and then forcing them to act like obnoxious eight-year-olds. Where is the good in that? We want to like Canada and all the terrific wrestlers the country produces, but with people like D'Amore running around, it's so darn hard!



Thumbs Down to Trish Stratus. Sometimes it's just hard to imagine that someone so wickedly mean can also be so undeniably beautiful. We understand that Stratus wants to protect her position as WWE's number-one diva, but her treatment of diva search winner Christy Hemme has been downright poor. There was no reason that Stratus had to lead Molly Holly and Gail Kim in degrading Hemme on the first *Raw* of her official tenure as a WWE diva. Stripping her of her clothes was simply uncalled for! Is this the kind of bizarre initiation that routinely goes on in the divas locker room?

correspondents reports

Milwaukee, WI: WWE Taboo Tuesday

Correspondent: Hank Rollins

Intercontinental champion Chris Jericho didn't know who his opponent was going to be entering his match at the fan-interactive pay-per-view, which put him at a distinct disadvantage. As it turned out, the fans' choice also happened to be the wrestler who had earned Vince McMahon's endorsement one night earlier on *Raw*, Shelton Benjamin.

Neither man earned an immediate advantage, so Jericho sped things up with a few armdrags. Benjamin, however, wasn't intimidated, and used a few armdrags of his own. Jericho rocked Benjamin's head back with a forearm and then chopped away at his torso with a number of blows that made the Milwaukee crowd go, "Whoooooo!"

Y2J continued the assault by charging at Benjamin, but Benjamin dropped Jericho to the floor with a move that belied his relative inexperience. Back in the ring, Benjamin kept the advantage with a few hard chops, but Jericho caught him with a boot to the face. A running enzuigiri

earned the defending champion a two-count.

Jericho kept up the attack by kicking Benjamin in the back twice. He then targeted Benjamin's spine with a devastating backbreaker. Benjamin caught the champ off-guard with a sunset flip for a near-fall. Jericho, infuriated with Benjamin's resolve, went to the top rope to put the match away, but Benjamin caught him and brought him back down to the mat with a huge superplex that left both men breathless.

A few minutes later, Jericho seemed to have the match wrapped up after hitting his lionsault, but Benjamin kicked out of the subsequent pinfall attempt. Frustrated, Jericho forgot about his match strategy. Benjamin saw his opportunity and put the match away with an explosive T-bone suplex.

In other bouts: Women's champion Trish Stratus beat Jazz, Stacy Keibler, Molly Holly, Victoria, Nidia, and Gail Kim in a schoolgirl battle royal ... Gene Snitsky beat Kane in a chain match ... Eugene beat Raw General Manager Eric Bischoff in a hair vs. hair match ... Chris Benoit & Edge beat Raw tag team champions La Resistance to win

the title ... Christy Hemme beat Carmella DeCesare in a lingerie pillow fight ... Raw champion Triple-H beat Shawn Michaels ... Randy Orton beat Ric Flair in a steel cage match.

Newville, PA:

International Wrestling Cartel

Correspondent: Timothy A. Walker

The fans at the Big Spring High School were clearly behind Al Snow from the minute he walked out of the locker room to face Chris Hero. Snow and Hero began the match by trading holds, with Snow grabbing the early advantage. Hero immediately bailed out of the ring. When he returned, he traded a series of headlocks and reversals with Snow, but Snow regained the upper hand with relative ease. It was clear that Hero was frustrated, but he kept coming after Snow. Hero applied more and more pressure on Snow's neck and back, and it looked like Snow might have to tap out. Somehow, though, Snow made it to the ropes to force a break.

From there, Snow and Hero traded hard forearm blows and strikes. Hero's forearms rocked Snow, but Snow delivered some equally hard strikes. The match went back and forth until Hero missed a moonsault. It looked like Snow would get



Shelton Benjamin made all those fans who voted for him to challenge Chris Jericho for the Intercontinental title at Taboo Tuesday proud by using a T-bone suplex to finish off Y2J and take his gold.

the win, but Hero managed to kick out before the referee could finish the three-count. Snow then used a pedigree and scored another near-fall. It would have been easy for Hero to quit, but he came back and used a choke-slam to knock the wind out of Snow. Hero tried for a pin, but Snow kicked out. Hero then whipped Snow into the ropes and caught him with a big boot and a legdrop. Snow again just managed to lift his shoulder off the mat to avoid being pinned.

With the fans rallying behind him, Snow fought back and used a stunner to score another near-fall on Hero. Snow then took off his boot, pulled off his sock, and tried to use the mandible claw on Hero. Hero grabbed Snow's arm and tried to block the move. As Snow struggled to apply mandible claw, both men tumbled over and bumped into the ref. That's when Snow grabbed his trademark mannequin head from the corner of the ring and used it to nail Hero. Hero fell to the mat and Snow covered him for the three-count.

In other bouts: John McChesney pinned Chris Hamrick ... Eddie Kingston & Jack Marciano beat The Gambino Brothers Moving Company ... International champion Soldier defeated Jimmy Jacobs ... Sterling James Keenan pinned C.M. Punk ... Heavyweight champion Shirley Doe defeated Eric Xtasy (Mick Foley was the guest referee) ... Sebastian Dark defeated Super Hentai.

Buffalo, NY: Ballpark Brawl III

Correspondent: Matt Brock

Ballpark Brawl III could have easily been dubbed the Hart family reunion. The card featured several family members, including a reunion of The Hart Foundation (Bret Hart, Jim Neidhart, and Jimmy Hart), as well as appearances by Nattie Neidhart (Jim's daughter), Harry Smith (Davey Boy Smith's son), and the always-controversial Teddy Hart (Bret's nephew). Two Harts, Harry and Teddy, competed in the Natural title tournament and the two ended up squaring off in the finals with Uncle Bret watching intently from ringside.

The bout opened with strong technical exchanges as Hart attempted to negate the 6'5" Smith's edge in power by outwrestling him with leg rides and hammerlocks. Twice, Smith rallied and tossed Hart to the floor. On the way back into the ring, Hart spurned Smith as he held open the ropes. He opted to moonsault into the ring instead. Smith



Cousins Harry Smith and Teddy Hart embrace after a hard-fought match for the Natural title in Buffalo. Bret Hart, their uncle, clearly approved of the show of good sportsmanship.

Photo courtesy of Ballpark Brawl

responded with a vicious clothesline and stunned Hart with a textbook suplex. Smith's enthusiasm got the best of him when he missed with a legdrop from the top rope, which allowed Hart to utilize his incredible high-flying skills, including a standing moonsault executed from the middle of the top rope, showing incredible balance.

Smith kicked out of Hart's variation of sliced bread number two and connected with a pair of power bombs to take the upper hand. But Hart caught Smith with a stiff kick to the gut. Hart went for a sunset flip from the apron, but Smith reversed the roll and cradled Hart's legs, just as Davey Boy had done to pin Bret in the main event of SummerSlam 1992. But Hart arched back to reverse the cradle again, scoring the pinfall and winning the tournament trophy.

In other bouts: Jim Neidhart pinned Jonny Puma ... Abyss and Ron Killings wrestled to a double-countout in a semi-final tournament match ... Harry Smith defeated Petey Williams in a semi-final tournament match ... Christopher Daniels defeated The Amazing Red ... Derek Wylde pinned Cody Steele ... Jimmy Hart beat Z-103 DJ Dave Blezard in a challenge match ... Nattie Neidhart defeated Tracy Brooks ... A.J. Styles beat Teddy Hart and Sabu in a three-way TLC match to win the Natural title from Hart. □

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THE RETURN OF THE OUTSIDERS IS A TNA COUP

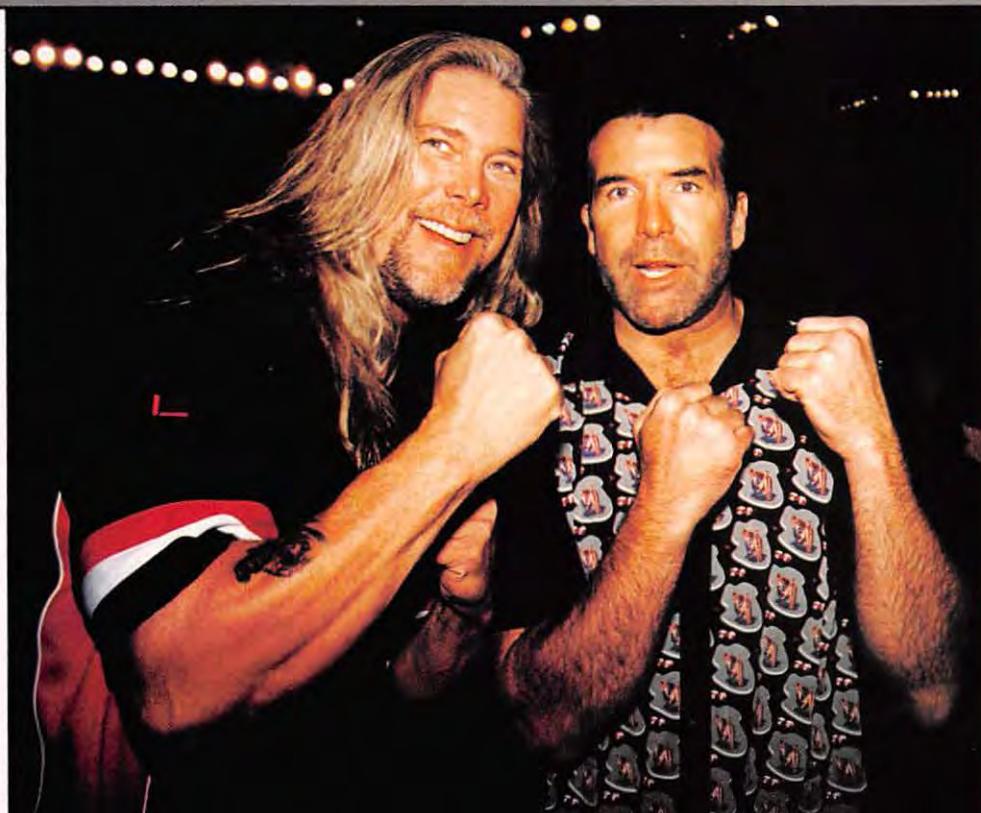
By Will Welsh

BY THE TIME you read this, TNA's first three-hour Sunday night pay-per-view, *Victory Road*, will be history. However, as I write this, *Victory Road* is still very much in the planning stages. The only match signed is X champion Petey Williams defending his title against former NWA champion A.J. Styles.

However, according to *THE WRESTLER*'s inside sources, TNA officials were said to be in negotiations with a number of high-profile performers. The three names garnering the most attention? Scott Hall and Kevin Nash (The Outsiders) and Sean Waltman. All three have been away from the ring for quite some time—Nash because injuries have slowed him considerably in recent years, Hall and Waltman because of personal demons. Now all three men are reportedly healthy, clean, and sober—and TNA is interested in their services.

Their addition to the TNA roster has been the talk of the fall. Fans are either unabashedly for the move or they're dead-set against it. I have yet to meet anyone who has said, "It really doesn't matter either way"—which is why I think TNA's ambitious move to sign them is right on the mark.

Besides Goldberg and Steve Austin, is there anyone out there who could create such interest in TNA? Is there another free agent wrestler—or any other combination of free agent wrestlers—who is so polarizing? No, there isn't. Hall (thanks to his much-



The Outsiders will probably stir up some trouble backstage in TNA (assuming they end up there). That won't necessarily be a bad thing, writes Will Welsh.

publicized bouts with substance abuse), Nash (thanks to his penchant for political maneuverings), and Waltman (thanks to his tumultuous relationship with Joanie "Chyna" Laurer) are three of the most divisive wrestlers in the history sport. Wherever they go, controversy—and headlines—follow.

That's exactly what TNA is banking on. Fans are already trying to figure out when (not if) The Outsiders will try to wrest creative control of TNA from Jeff Jarrett. A lot of fans are actually hoping that Hall, Nash, and Waltman play their political games and make the TNA locker room as divided as WCW's was!

Now, I don't really know whether that would be a good thing, as a compelling argument can be made either

way, but I do know that had Hulk Hogan's name been bandied about for *Victory Road*, people would be talking, but not as much.

Face it: People are actually excited that The Outsiders might backstab the man who started the company! Yes, it's sick, twisted, and outrageous, but the likely Outsider-induced chaos is also creating more p.r. for TNA than anything else in the promotion's history!

The bottom line? If it takes the potential of a WCW-like disaster to get a broader audience of people interested in TNA, then bring on that potential WCW-like disaster.

Will Welsh is a senior writer for *THE WRESTLER*.

counterpoint:

THE RETURN OF THE OUTSIDERS IS A TNA BLUNDER

By Dave Lenker

UNFORTUNATELY, WILL Welsh subscribes to Eric Bischoff's famous philosophy that goes something like this: "Controversy equals cash."

I disagree, and here's why: All controversy ultimately created for Bischoff was a general manager position in WWE.

Doh!

Are The Outsiders controversial? You betcha! They stir up locker rooms so easily it's like a magical gift, and they seem to enjoy reading about the bedlam they create in publications like this one. A lot of wrestling fans like reading about their backstage antics too. In fact, there probably are more fans who enjoy reading about their political games than there are fans who enjoy watching them wrestle at this point—and that's the problem.

Sure, Hall, Nash, and Waltman will garner TNA headlines (we're talking about them right now), but that's all they'll do. They aren't going to provide the company with five-star matches or scintillating in-ring storylines—which are the kind of things TNA needs in order to move forward. The promotion has already had enough controversy within its first two years. What it needs now is substance.

I can hear some of you now: "But The Outsiders are one of the best tag teams of all-time. History tells us that they'll provide substance!"

Know what history tells me? History tells me that Nash's knees will be lucky to survive his first match back, that Hall has a history of being unreliable, and that Waltman will quickly tire of management and become some-

thing of a backstage bore.

History—especially recent history—doesn't tell me that any of these guys will look particularly good in the ring.

Considering all this, it's hard to imagine that The Outsiders presence will encourage a significant number of fans to buy a TNA pay-per-view—which is what the promotion needs for The Outsiders to accomplish! These three guys were at the top of their games from roughly 1996 to 1998. Clearly, their best days are behind them.

And not to be completely down on these guys, but who are they going to wrestle? I don't see 5'9" A.J. Styles trading blows with Nash, who stands seven feet tall. I also don't see six-foot Jeff Hardy going toe-to-toe with 6'8" Hall. At 6'2", Monty Brown has a little bit more size, but I don't see either Hall or Nash doing much for the career of a virtually unknown guy who wears leopard print trunks.



If Sean Waltman ends up in TNA with Scott Hall and Kevin Nash, there's a good chance he'll be doing most of the work in the ring in tag matches. Given his recent problems, it's hardly a guarantee that even he will produce good matches, argues Dave Lenker.

Call me crazy, but I don't see any of those scenarios coming into play.

Hall, Nash, and Waltman are effective in short doses, but right now, TNA needs some long-term therapy—and the last thing it needs is a cancer in the backstage area creating problems where there shouldn't be any.

Dave Lenker is the editor-in-chief of THE WRESTLER.

introducing:

By Harry Burkett

PETEY WILLIAMS



Photos by Vern Verna

Less than a year ago, Petey Williams was still setting up and breaking down rings in his native Ontario, hoping to become a major star someday. That day has come very quickly for the TNA X champion

JUST BEFORE A recent *Impact* taping at Orlando's Universal Studios, TNA producers were huddled around a small screen watching a video package. Petey Williams and Team Canada teammate Eric Young peered over their shoulders to take a look.

The package was hyping Williams' upcoming X title defense against A.J. Styles at Victory Road, TNA's first Sunday night pay-per-view. The Williams-Styles rivalry had been put to music, edited together to highlight their coolest moves, and was complete with the "green screen" special effects of the superstars posing and grinning for the camera. It was standard stuff in today's high-tech wrestling business, but it caused Williams to shake his head in wonder.

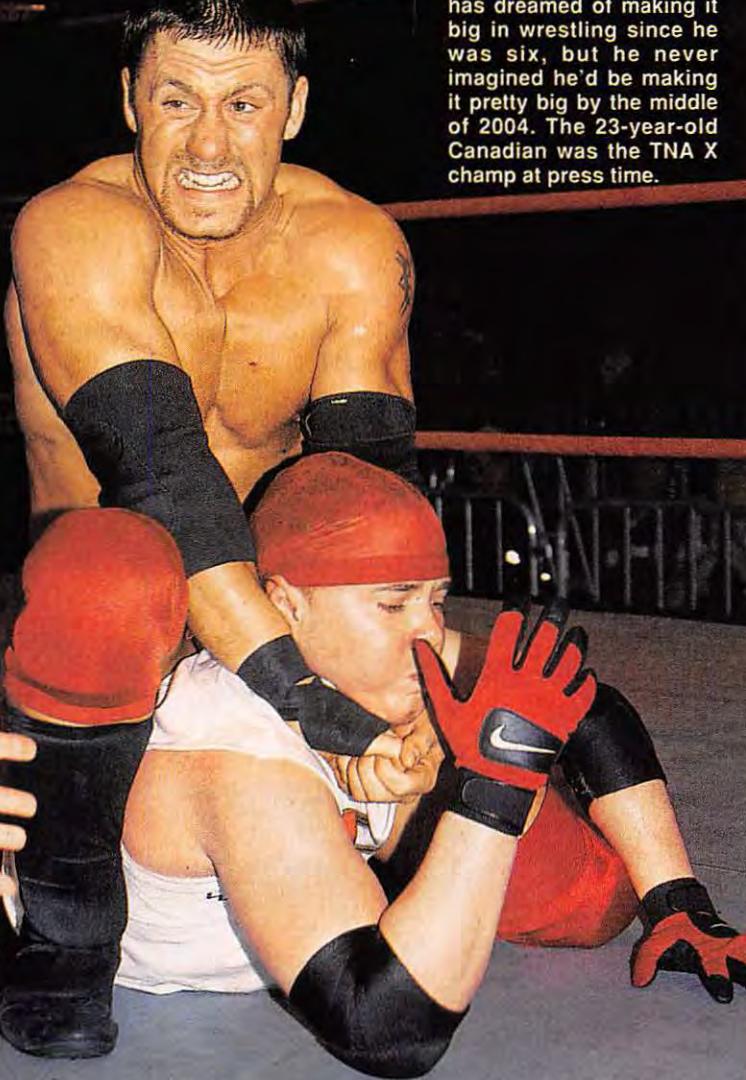
Young turned to Williams and asked, "Did you ever think this would happen?"

"Never in my wildest dreams," replied Williams.

The two friends didn't have to say any more. They both knew what the other meant.

"When I saw that video package, I realized I had finally made it," explained Williams. "I have tapes of my matches from the indy circuit, and I don't receive *Impact* in my hometown of Windsor, Ontario, so it blew me away to see how a TV show can make someone a larger-than-life figure. Once you hear Mike Tenay and Don West talking about you, and once they add all the pyros and music, it's incredible to watch yourself. It's hard to believe it's me."

To him, the person on television didn't seem like a flesh-and-blood human being anymore. Somehow, television had created an image that had transcended him. Despite the cocky attitude he displays with his Team Canada cohorts, Williams found all of it very humbling. After all, he had been working hard at his craft for a long time.



Pete Williams (shown against The Amazing Red) has dreamed of making it big in wrestling since he was six, but he never imagined he'd be making it pretty big by the middle of 2004. The 23-year-old Canadian was the TNA X champ at press time.

the Canadian destroyer, arguably the most visually stunning finisher in wrestling history. Coming off the ropes, Williams flips both himself and his opponent in the air and lands in a piledriver position—and then it's all over when he spikes his helpless foe's head into the mat.

"Actually, Chris Sabin came up with the concept while we were driving to a show," said Williams. "I believe he saw a similar move in a video game and thought it would be a cool finisher. Chris was my opponent that night, but I didn't want to use his own idea against him, so I waited a while. I didn't try it until I wrestled at an IWA Mid-South show. Since that time, promoters have always wanted me to use it."

And why did he name his move the Canadian destroyer? According to Williams, "I thought back to a Border City show that made a big impact on me. I had been training for only a month, and Scott put together a

memorial show for Doug Chevalier, who helped train several local wrestlers. He had died at an early age, and over 1,200 people turned out for the show to pay tribute to him. Because of the indy wrestlers who worked so hard out there, and the fans who showed their respect for Doug, I gained a new respect for wrestling. Doug's nickname was 'The Canadian Destroyer.' I asked Scott if I could use that name for my finisher, and he thought it was a great idea."

No doubt Chevalier would be proud of the honor. Since capturing the X title in a 20-man gauntlet match on August 11, Williams has become the hottest rising star in TNA. A series of matches against A.J. Styles should boost his reputation even further. "Right now, I'm just enjoying my time in TNA," said the 23-year-old star. "It's great to work so closely with Scott D'Amore, and with so many of my heroes, like Jeff Jarrett and B.G. James. I'm not taking anything for granted."

Indeed, Williams' wildest dreams are coming true. Believe it. □

Williams had wanted to be a wrestler since the age of six. As a teenager, he participated in amateur wrestling, football, basketball, and weightlifting—all with the purpose of developing his body for a pro wrestling career. In 2000, Williams enrolled in Scott D'Amore's wrestling school in Windsor and worked closely with head trainer Bobby Clancy. He debuted against one of his fellow trainees, Gutter, in D'Amore's Border City Wrestling promotion. Although Williams lost that match, he had no second thoughts about what he wanted to do with his life.

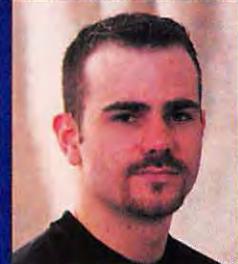
Williams' career took a positive turn by the end of 2003, when he made appearances in IWA Mid-South and Combat Zone Wrestling, working with up-and-comers such as Chris Hero and Teddy Hart. D'Amore, by this time a TNA talent agent, took note of his former protege's improvement and offered the 5'7", 183-pounder a spot in TNA.

Of course, Williams' awesome finishing maneuver helped him garner some attention. He is the master of

from bell to bell

By Mike Quackenbush

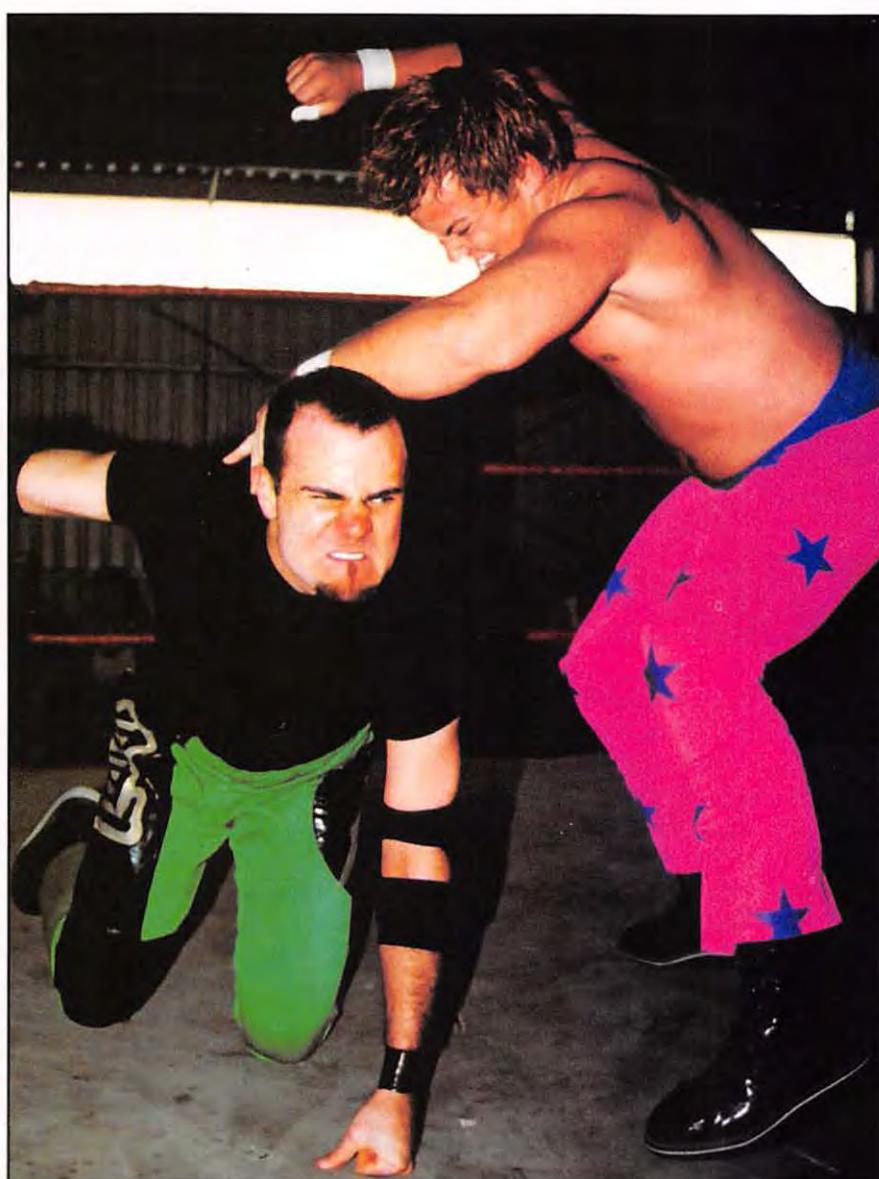
[Editor's note: Mike Quackenbush, who has held numerous titles in the United States and beyond, files reports on the life of an independent wrestler seeking to make an impact on the business. In this issue, he writes about his experiences at the 2004 Ted Petty Invitational. Though he has wrestled at that event before, this year was the most fulfilling to him personally.]



I'M JUST BACK from the Ted Petty Invitational in Highland, Indiana. When I first wrestled in this tournament, it was called the Sweet Science 16. Now, a few years have passed, and a lot has changed. The independent scene is quite different; the name of the tourney and even the number of participants are different (changed from 16 to 24). This year's Ted Petty Invitational was spread across two days, and the brackets were filled with some of today's brightest stars: A.J. Styles, American Dragon, Arik Cannon ... the list is as long as my arm.

Since I first wrestled in the Sweet Science 16, I've opened a wrestling school, written a few books, and studied Lucha Libre and British mat wrestling with an increased fervor. I've toured Mexico and Europe a few times, collected a hefty supply of championships, even trained a few dozen wrestlers myself. I've changed my look, changed my ring outfits, and changed my cardiovascular conditioning regimen quite a bit. The changes in the last three years have been anything but minor.

While I've been busy, new classes of independent stars have come and gone. I am part of a group of guys from the mid-1990s that has started to vanish. My contemporaries were Reckless Youth and Ace Darling, Christian York and Joey Matthews, Devon Storm and Don Montoya. At the turn of the millennium, a new crop of guys came up ... and two years later, they were replaced by a new crew ... and today, a new group has supplanted them. That's the cycle of the pro wrestling business. In 1998, I wrestled all over the country, flying from state to state



A lot has changed in the world of independent professional wrestling since Mike Quackenbush (shown against Larry Sweeney) made his debut, but one thing that never changes is the feeling of satisfaction he gets when he knows he has thoroughly entertained a crowd. He discovered that again while participating in the 2004 Ted Petty Invitational.

every weekend, taking more bookings than I knew what to do with. I had to turn down more offers than I could accept because the calendar just wasn't big enough. But now it's 2004, and most places I go fans are surprised to find out that I'm not dead. Even though I've been busy doing the things in wrestling that make me happy, it evidently hasn't done much in terms of keeping my name out there. (What, do they skip right over "Bell To Bell" when they buy *THE WRESTLER*?)

I've done my share of the popular annual tournaments. I counted them up the other day, and the number was ridiculous. Super 8s and J-Cups and Shamrocks and on and on. When a tourney is over, I usually think, on the way home, *I could have given a better performance, I could have gone further, I could have done more.* Maybe the fact that I've never won one of the annual tournaments is a blessing in disguise, because it never allows me a moment to be complacent. I always feel like I haven't done enough. So instead of waiting for the ride home to start pondering, this time around I considered it on the trip to Highland, knowing that the first-round match with Chris Hero, my training partner, might be as far as I was going to get.

At this year's Ted Petty Invitational, I put everything out there. I dusted off old techniques I had all but forgotten and polished up some of my newest inventions as well. It wasn't enough to appear at the Ted Petty for my token, "Hey, I'm not dead yet" appearance. I wanted to show the audience that if you haven't seen me lately ... you haven't seen me at all.

Fortunately, I had three opportunities to make my point. The tournament was a spectrum of emotions for me. I found out that Hero was leaving for Big Japan with only a few hours notice. The Wild Cards (Eddie Kingston and Jack Marciano), two of my proteges, captured the IWA Mid-South tag title in their biggest win to date as I stood watching from behind the curtain. An old song from the summer of 1993 replaced my usual entrance theme, and while to some it's just an odd tune from a music video of mine, to me it was the soundtrack to a fun time in my life. To hear it blaring from the speakers sparked up a feeling of nostalgia I too rarely allow myself to enjoy.

The sweetest of these moments,



Although he didn't win this year's TPI and has never won one of the many annual indy tournaments, he found it to be a big success on a personal level. And not only did his matches go well, but he was proud to watch his proteges Jack Marciano (shown against Jolly Roger) and Eddie Kingston take home the IWA Mid-South tag title.

though, came as the Ted Petty weekend concluded. I had observed the finals of the tournament from the merchandise stand at the rear of the hall. As the audience filed out past me, several dozen fans took turns stopping by to see me. They could have said things like, "Hey, good match" or "Hey, you're alive," but what I heard most of all was simply, "Thank you." That's a phrase most independents probably hear far too infrequently. It was a sincere experience as real as you'll get in a business like pro wrestling, and it lingered at the forefront of my mind for some time.

On the 12-hour car ride home from the Ted Petty, I thought more about the

IWA fans than I did about my bouts opposite "American Dragon" Bryan Danielson, Nate Webb, and Hero. I thought about the warm reception they gave me, and the kind sendoff they delivered after my last match, a loss to Dragon. I thought about the personal encounters, fans that I met individually, some for the first time, some for the first time in many years. Even though the Ted Petty wasn't mine to win, I accomplished what I set out to do. The glory may have gone to A.J. Styles at the end of the tournament, but it would be impossible for me to label my Highland road trip as anything other than a success. □

Spotlight On...

SPIKE DUDLEY

THE RUNT OF the Dudley litter has been slaying giants and defying the odds for a decade now, and he has the WWE cruiserweight championship to show for his perseverance ... Born Matthew Hyson in Providence, Rhode Island, he became a wrestling fan as a child and dreamed of pursuing a career as a pro wrestler, but at his size (currently 5'7", 155 pounds), he was realistic enough to continue his education and eventually find work as a substitute teacher ... But finding a "real" job didn't make him give up on his dream, and in May 1993, he enrolled at the APW wrestling school in California to be trained as a referee ... But Spike couldn't be content being so close to the action and not actually wrestling himself, and he began training to compete.

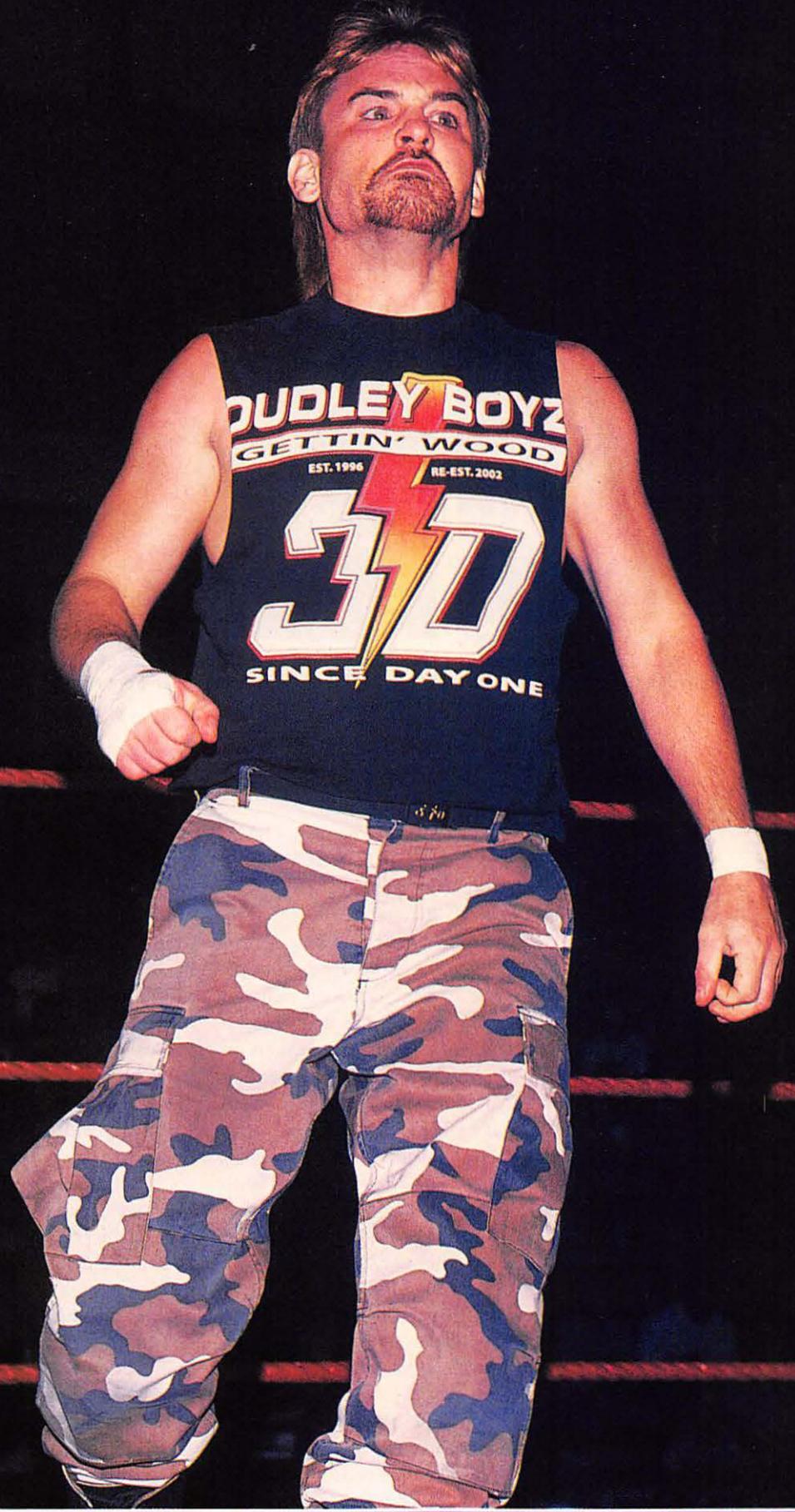
He made his wrestling debut in 1995, but his big break came in 1996, when Paul Heyman invited him into Extreme Championship Wrestling, where he was placed in the role as the smallest "half-brother" of the sprawling Dudley clan ... With his tongue lolling out of his mouth and his goofy glasses, Spike looked like the love child of George Steele and Steve Urkel from the TV show *Family Matters*, with a touch of the hippie era thrown in ... Quickly gained the respect of fans and his fellow wrestlers alike for his willingness to put his body on the line and his incredible ability to absorb punishment and keep coming back for more ... At ECW's big 1996 Holiday Hell card, Spike teamed with Buh Buh Ray Dudley to beat Davey Pisano and Little Guido in one of

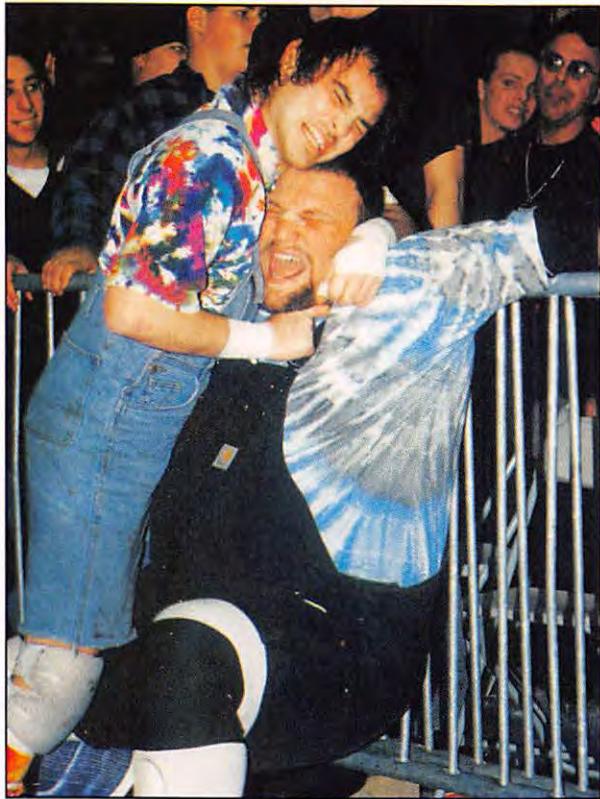
Spike's first high-profile matches ... But little Spike didn't seem to be cut from the same cloth as his violent, rule-breaking kin, and he remained a fan favorite even when Buh Buh and D-Von were the biggest villains in ECW ... Took the first step in building his reputation as a giant killer in the summer of 1997 by scoring a huge upset over Bam Bam Bigelow, who outweighed Spike by more than 200 pounds, courtesy of Spike's acid drop (Dudley dog) finisher ... The loss enraged Bigelow, who made short work of Spike in their pay-per-view rematch at Hardcore Heaven 1997.

When Buh Buh and D-Von decided they wanted to kick little Spike around a while, he found backup in the form of New Jack, one-half of The Gangstas. New Jack and Spike defeated the



August 1997: Little Spike Dudley got thrown into the crowd by his opponents many a time in ECW. Sometimes, though, he willingly surfed his way through the masses. The ECW faithful never let him fall.

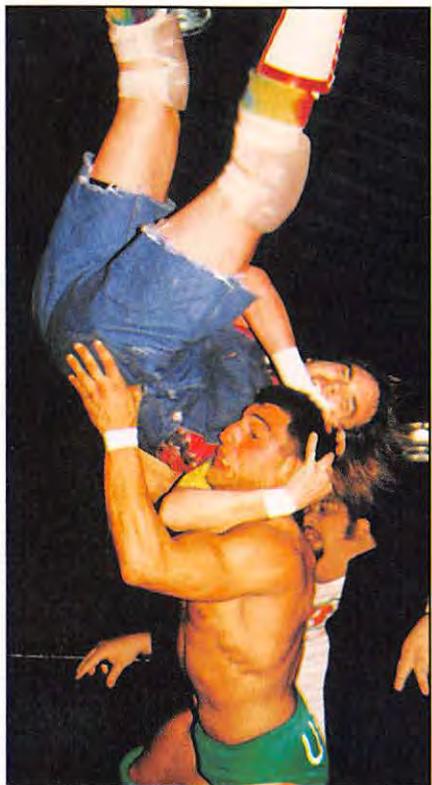




December 1997: Is that Spike hugging half-brother Buh Buh Ray ... or jumping him? Figuring out the relationship between him and his larger siblings over the years hasn't been easy.



May 2001: Spike has a size advantage against ... well ... no one in WWE, so if it takes jumping on an opponent's back to bring him down, so be it!



December 1999: The Dudley dog was called the acid drop when Spike used it as a finisher in ECW. His foe here is Little Guido (Nunzio), a man against whom Spike has defended the WWE cruiserweight belt.

Dudleys and Mahoney and Axl Rotten in an intense three-way dance at Living Dangerously 1998 ... Got his first taste of the main event when he teamed with Tommy Dreamer and The Sandman to beat Buh Buh, D-Von, and "Big" Dick Dudley shortly thereafter.

When Spike wasn't recruiting heavy-hitters to help him score upsets over his brothers, he was the one man welcoming committee for all the super heavyweights who came to make a mark in ECW ... At November to Remember 1998, Spike defeated both Mabel and the massive Ulf Hermann in a handicap match ... Continued to battle his family through much of 1999, teaming with New Jack in a losing effort at Guilty as Charged and then pairing with Nova to grab a thoroughly unexpected victory at Living Dangerously ... But Spike's biggest win over the other Dudleys came at Heatwave '99 on July 18, when he and Mahoney beat Buh Buh and D-Von in a streetfight to win the ECW tag title ... The Dudleys won the title back less than a month later, but Spike and Mahoney regained the belts just one day after that ... Spike and Mahoney lost

the straps for good on August 26.

Proving he could succeed as a singles wrestler against smaller, more technically sound competition, Spike scored a win over Simon Diamond at November to Remember '99, a win that actually put him into contention for the ECW World title ... Spike faced ECW champ Mike Awesome for the title in the main event of Guilty as Charged 2000, only to be massacred by the champion ... Suffered a knee injury in that match, one that he would aggravate a month later in a match against Lance Storm, and then reinjure in a rematch with Awesome ... Was thus forced to undergo surgery and was kept out of action for nine months.

While Spike was recuperating, Cyrus (Don Callis) attempted to recruit him to his rule-breaking Network, but Spike—making his first TV appearance in four months—rebuffed the manager and made it clear his allegiances were still with the fans ... On November 5, Spike finally returned to wrestling, teaming with Danny Doring and Roadkill to beat E.Z. Money, Julio Dinero, and Chris Hamrick at November to Remember ... Felt Rhyno's gore at the Massacre on 34th



June 2001: Remember the super-sweet fairy tale romance between Spike and Molly Holly? Steve Austin obviously objected. Both of them have since embraced a much harder edge.

Street pay-per-view at the Hammerstein Ballroom in a TV title match, then was named on-air commissioner of the promotion, a "title" he held until ECW suspended operations in early-2001 ... It looked like the end of ECW might spell the end of Spike's career, but he surprised even a lot of wrestling insiders by signing with the WWF and making a surprise debut on the March 19, 2001, edition of *Raw*, helping the Dudleys beat Edge and

Christian to regain the WWF tag title ... Teamed with Buh Buh Ray and D-Von on May 7 to beat Justin Credible, X-Pac, and Albert (A-Train) in a tables match when little Spike put the huge Albert through a ringside table.

But just when all appeared right with the reunited Dudleys, Molly Holly caught Spike's eye, igniting some harsh

feelings between the Dudley clan and the Holly clan (Hardcore and Crash), not to mention some tension between Spike and his half-brothers, who felt he was getting soft on them ... On June 11, Spike and Molly kissed for the first time, right in the middle of the ring ... Two weeks later, they beat Jacquelyn and Crash Holly in an intergender tag team match ... But Spike's world came crashing down on July 5, 2001, when he suffered a broken fibula and was forced to miss several weeks of action ... Took a page out of his old ECW playbook when he returned and came back with a formidable partner to watch his back. This time, it was The Big Show! ... Even took to wearing a singlet that resembled Show's ... At Unforgiven 2001, Spike and Show wrestled a four-way match for the tag title against Buh Buh Ray and D-

Von, Hurricane and Lance Storm, and The Hardy Boyz. The Dudleys won ... Also ended up losing Molly, as she dumped him to become Mighty Molly, sidekick to The Hurricane ... Maybe Spike was spending too much time with The Big Show, which would have to be



September 2001: The Big Show/Spike tag team didn't amount to much, but they were fun to watch. Okay, maybe not for an unsuspecting Buh Buh Ray.



January 2002: Spike and Tazz struck tag team gold for about six weeks in 2002. Lack of size didn't matter for them.



September 2002: Going back to the extreme! Spike and Raven must have had some ECW flashbacks when they squared off.

considered a major tactical error.

The littlest Dudley wasn't through with scoring upsets, however ... On January 7, 2002, Spike teamed with Tazz to win the WWE tag title from Buh Buh and D-Von ... Surprisingly, Tazz and Spike retained those belts against the

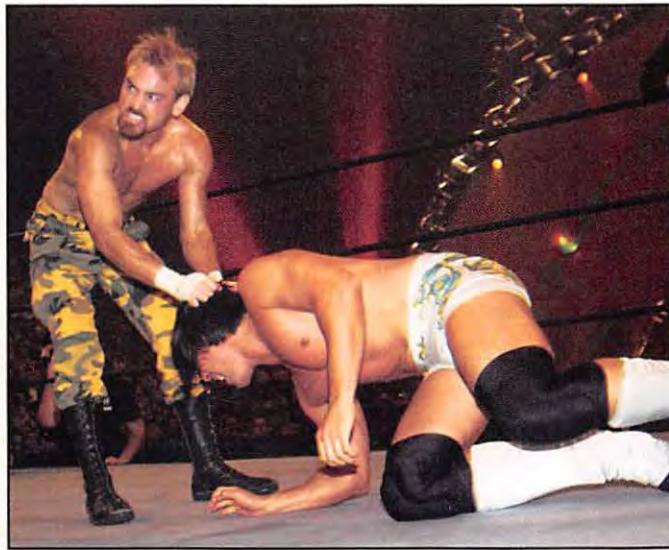
Dudleys at the Royal Rumble, and then against Booker T and Test at No Way Out, before finally dropping them to Billy Gunn and Chuck Palumbo ... At WrestleMania X8, Spike took advantage of the 24/7 rule and interfered in the hardcore match between Maven and

Goldust to win the belt himself, only to drop it minutes later to Hurricane ... Won the European title from William Regal on April 8, using Regal's own brass knuckles to get the win, but he lost the gold a month later ... Here's a result that Spike will probably brag about for the rest of his life: At Vengeance 2002, he and Buh Buh beat the team of Eddie Guerrero and Chris Benoit in a tables elimination match.

Spike spent most of 2003 nursing chronic injuries and entrenched on the Raw undercard ... Looked like his remarkable run had finally come to an end until Spike was suddenly sent from the Raw brand to Smackdown as part of the brand extension draft in March 2004 ... Went on a cruiserweight winning streak that earned him a match against Rey Misterio Jr. for the title ... On July 27, 2004, Spike beat Misterio to win the cruiserweight title when Buh Buh and D-Von interfered ... Seemed furious that his evil brothers would interfere in his business, then revealed he was in on it all along, attacking Rey along with Buh Buh and D-Von ... Though it really shouldn't be a surprise (after all, how many times can Spike surprise us?), he has become a strong cruiserweight champion ... The Dudleys beat Misterio, Paul London, and Billy Kidman at SummerSlam, and Spike retained the title with a win over Nunzio at No Mercy ... One thing is clear—it's a mistake to ever underestimate little Spike Dudley. □



August 2003: Christian gets a face full of canvas courtesy of Spike, who had probably started to think about turning heel at this point.



August 2004: The mean, cocky, aggressive Spike was on full display by the time SummerSlam 2004 rolled around. Paul London was but one target of his fury.

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Q&A



"I have a poster of Randy on the wall, and a shot or two of me. A lot of folks know Randy right away and they think I'm a wrestling fan. So, no, they don't recognize me at all. When I first started selling cars in '96, a lot of people recognized me. But now my hair is gray and I wear glasses. I also have chest of drawers disease. My chest is now in my drawers."

Bob Orton Jr. gave his son's blossoming career a boost three years ago by seconding him in the ring in Ohio Valley Wrestling. Seems Randy is doing pretty darn well on his own in WWE right now.

BOB ORTON JR.

100.5 THE FOX Rockin'

FOXY LADY

THEY WERE BOTH labeled as "Bob Orton's kid." Expectations were high for both Bob Orton Jr. and his son Randy because of their family name. Bob Jr. was best known as the son of the "Big O" Bob Orton, a six-time Southern champion who also made more than a dozen appearances in Madison Square Garden during the 1960s. Similarly, Randy was best known as the son of "Cowboy" Bob Orton at the start of his career.

Yet both young men soon became respected wrestlers in their own right. Bob Jr. tied with Tony Garea to earn the *Rookie of the Year Award* in 1973, and Randy earned the same honor from *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* in 2001. Bob Jr. defeated former NWA World champion Jack Brisco for the Florida State title and formed successful tag teams with Bob Roop and Dick Slater. After Randy emerged from Ohio Valley Wrestling, he went on to enjoy the longest WWE Intercontinental title reign in seven years and, at only 24 years old, defeated Chris Benoit for the Raw belt to become the youngest world champion in WWE history.

Just as Randy became a hated member of Evolution, Bob Jr. abandoned his scientific principles to become a ruthless mercenary. If a man had a bounty on his head, Orton would in all likelihood soon arrive in the territory to collect. He was a henchman for several managers, including Bobby Heenan, Gary Hart, and The Grand Wizard.

Orton's hottest run as a main-eventer occurred in 1982, when he challenged WWF champion Bob Backlund in a series of matches, including a showdown in Madison Square Garden. Later, Orton served as Roddy Piper's "ace" bodyguard during the "Rock 'n' Wrestling" era, often clubbing his boss' enemies with his cast, which remained on his arm for a couple of years. In addition to being in the corner of Piper and Paul Orndorff in the main event of WrestleMania I, he wrestled WWF champion Hulk Hogan and boxed Mr. T in two memorable *Saturday Night's Main Event* specials on NBC. He retired from full-time competition in 1987 due to a nagging back injury.

In this exclusive 60-minute "Q & A" with Senior Writer Harry Burkett, Orton discusses his son's success, his own career, and the pressures of following in the footsteps of a famous dad. According to Burkett, "Bob was a straight shooter, just like you would expect from an Orton. My interview with him was like a conversation you would have with someone at a local bar: informal, honest, and revealing. The only things missing were the cigarette smoke, the tinkling of bottles, and some good honky tonk music."





Bob Jr.'s father helped him out a lot as he tried to become a better amateur wrestler when he was a kid but didn't encourage him to go pro. Bob Jr. didn't push Randy into wrestling just as he won't push his younger son, Nathan, a promising 16-year-old athlete. If it happens, so be it.

Q: I think, Bob, that I can get to the heart of this interview with one simple question. After the long and successful career you've had, how does it feel to be best known as Randy Orton's father?

A: Some people act like they don't even know my name anymore, and they just call me "Randy Orton's dad." Currently, I sell used cars for a living, and that's what the guys I work with call me. But more than anything else, you can call me proud. Being known as "Randy Orton's dad" doesn't bother me a bit. After all, for years, I was known as Bob Orton's son.

Q: That's right. And I'm sure Randy knows what it's like to be known as "Bob Orton's son," too.

A: For a while, that might have been true. But now I think he's developing on his own just fine. There's no doubt he's getting better every week.

Q: How do you think WWE has handled his career so far? Have they pushed him too hard too soon? Or not enough?

A: Gosh, who am I to second-guess those higher-ups in WWE? They

are the sharpest guys in the business today. They gave him a taste of success, and he handled what they threw at him very well. So, no, I don't think they pushed him too hard and too fast. They passed him the ball and he's running with it.

Q: Are you able to talk to Randy very often these days?

A: We usually go over his matches when he comes back home to St. Louis. He's an avid student and he's always willing to learn.

Q: Do you think he's handling his success pretty well?

A: Oh, yeah, he's still the same Randy. He's always been a good kid. Success hasn't changed him one bit.

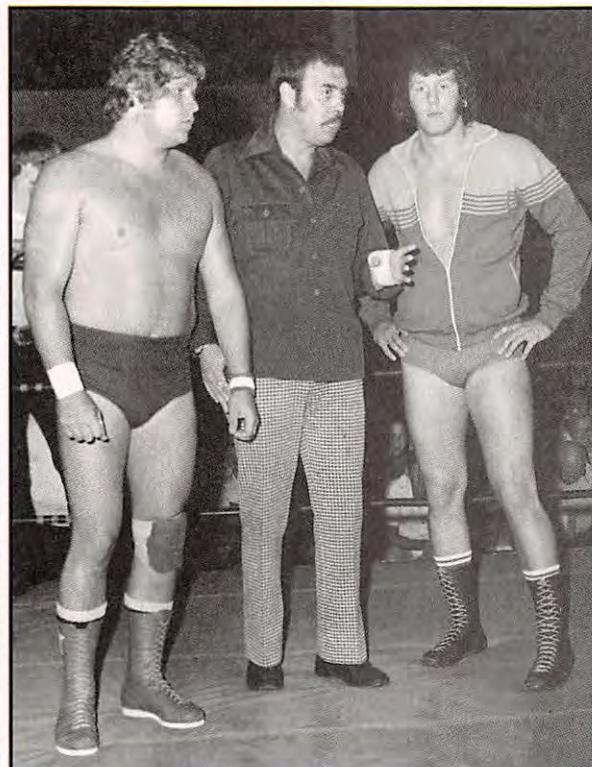
Q: Did you feel pressure from the fans and your fellow wrestlers to perform at a certain

level because your father was a famous wrestler?

A: Maybe so, but I think that was pressure I brought upon myself. I'm sure the other guys didn't hold me to unrealistic expectations. But, like Randy, I caught on to the wrestling business pretty quick. I went to the matches when I was a young boy and watched my dad in the ring for years. Once I got out there as a young wrestler, everything seemed to click for me—just because I had already watched it up close for so many years.

Q: That makes sense. So I assume Randy handled it in a similar way. Did wrestling come more naturally to him because he'd been watching you since he was a kid?

A: I think so, at least subconsciously. He watched me a lot on TV and, when he was old enough to go to the matches, I tried to take him when I could. Keep in mind, though, that Randy was only four years old in 1984. By the time he was old enough, the WWF had gone national and we were flying



Orton learned a lot from a lot of managers, including Gary Hart. And he thinks he and the other man in this photo, Dick Slater, were tremendously innovative as a tag team—before wrestling went national.

from one place to another. But if I had a short run, over to Cleveland or Dallas, for example, I would take him along. It was completely different when I was a kid because of the territorial nature of the business. Dad and I could just drive to the matches within that given area and return home that night. So it was a lot easier for Dad to take me to the matches than for me to take Randy.

Q: I see what you mean. How much was wrestling a part of Randy's life while he was growing up? Did you try to pass it off as just another job, or was he into "Hulkamania" and the action figures like any other kid?

A: Sure he was. Also, I got him started in amateur wrestling when he was nine, so he's been on the mat for quite some time.

Q: What kind of sports was he involved in at the high school level?

A: He wrestled and played basket-

ball. At 11 years old, he won the AAU Missouri State wrestling championship. Right then, I knew he was going to be a pretty good wrestler. He had a lot of tough competition in his weight class, but he was still successful. To my surprise, he decided to play basketball in high school. He did that for a couple of years and didn't do too darn bad for someone who took it up all of a sudden. Randy didn't return to wrestling until his final two years in high school. Despite that, he did very well and won about 80 matches in his junior and senior years.

Q: All the while, did you believe he would become a pro wrestler someday?

A: He brought it up a few times, but I never wanted to influence him one way or another. I knew pro wrestling was an option for him, so it was really his decision whether to pursue it.

Q: If I remember correctly, he went into the Marines for a while.



"I knew pro wrestling was an option for [Randy], so it was really his decision whether to pursue it."



The year 1982 was one of "Cowboy" Bob's best. He had a nice run against WWF World champion Bob Backlund (above left) and some good bouts with a WWF champion of another era, Pedro Morales (above right).

How come he decided to do that, instead of jumping into wrestling right away?

A: Oh, he was young, full of vinegar and piss. When he mentioned it, I asked, "Why do you want to be a Marine?" He looked at me and said, "Dad, haven't you ever seen *Rambo*?" Anyway, that was the answer he gave me.

Q: Well, he looks like a Marine. But a lot of people have called him "the new Rock," in terms of the way WWE is pushing him. Already, you could argue that he has comparable ability to The Rock in the ring. Do you think he has an eye toward becoming an actor or something other than a wrestler, a bigger star in another venue?

A: Shoot, I don't know. Time will tell. I never compare the two. The Rock is The Rock, and Randy is Randy. I've always advised him to be himself and to never try to be anybody else. You have to make your



A lot of people forget that Orton was not only a major player during the heyday of the "Rock 'n' Wrestling Connection," but that he battled Hulk Hogan on the very first edition of *Saturday Night's Main Event* on NBC.



Although many people assume he did so, Orton did not invent the superplex. He remembers seeing Scott Irwin use the move before him, and the two used to joke about it.

own image in wrestling. I don't think comparisons to The Rock bother Randy one way or another. That's not on his mind at all.

Q: It seems as if he hasn't pigeonholed himself into a definable character yet. He's more or less presenting himself as Randy Orton.

A: Yeah, exactly. I think you've got to do that, because if you can be yourself in front of the fans and that works, then you've got it made. You feel your way through and, if it's there, it's there. When you hit upon the right formula, you'll know right away.

Q: What was some of the advice you gave him when he first started out?

A: I told him to listen to the guys who have experience, stay in the gym and work out hard, stay off the booze and the dope, and you'll do just fine. He's already got the look of a star. Not everybody has it, and it's impossible to manufacture it. Every week, I watch him grow and become more at ease. He'll only get better with time.

Q: Sure. Did your father give you the same advice? Or was his advice to you different?

A: He really didn't want me in the wrestling business. He wanted me to go to college. When I broke into wrestling in Florida, Dad wasn't there at the time, so I learned a lot from the veterans there. I probably learned the most from Jack Brisco. Whenever Jack was around, I volunteered to drive him to the arena so I could ask him more questions. I was thankful for all the advice and guidance I received in Florida at the beginning of my career, and then later on in Georgia.

Q: How is your father these days?

A: He needs a hip replaced and is too stubborn to do it. Other than that, he's doing great living in Las Vegas, where he's been since '77.

Q: How much does he follow Randy's career?

A: He follows Randy's career very closely. We talk every week or so, and we go over everything that Randy is doing. Dad is really proud of him, too.

Q: I've noticed WWE has referred to Randy's family lineage quite a bit. Has anyone contacted you about being part of a storyline, or do you think—as with the case of The Rock and

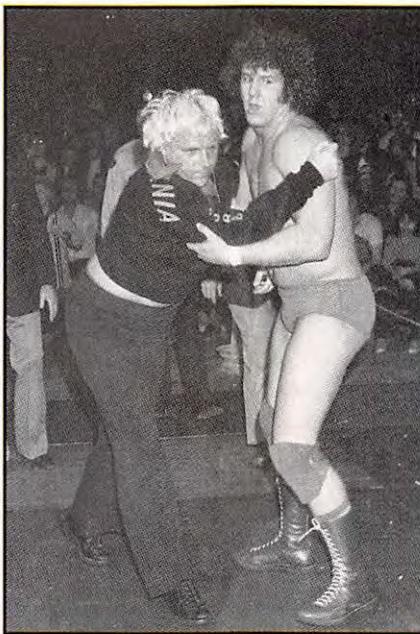
Rocky Johnson—they don't want to draw the comparisons that much?

A: Gosh, I don't know. I'd probably mess everything up for him. My back's bad, my neck's bad, and my knees are shot. Other than that, I'm in pretty good shape (laughs).

Q: I'm sure you could do a good job talking for him.

A: Well, he keeps improving there, too. He doesn't need me. He's got to be Randy Orton, and that's what he's doing. If I'm around, he might approach things differently. He needs to blossom by himself.

Q: You mentioned that you began your career in Florida. Once you gained some experience, didn't your father come in for a series of tag team matches with you? If I remember the angle at



Orton must have been doing something right as a heel in his career if he was often seen in the company of such legends as Bobby Heenan (above) and The Grand Wizard (below).



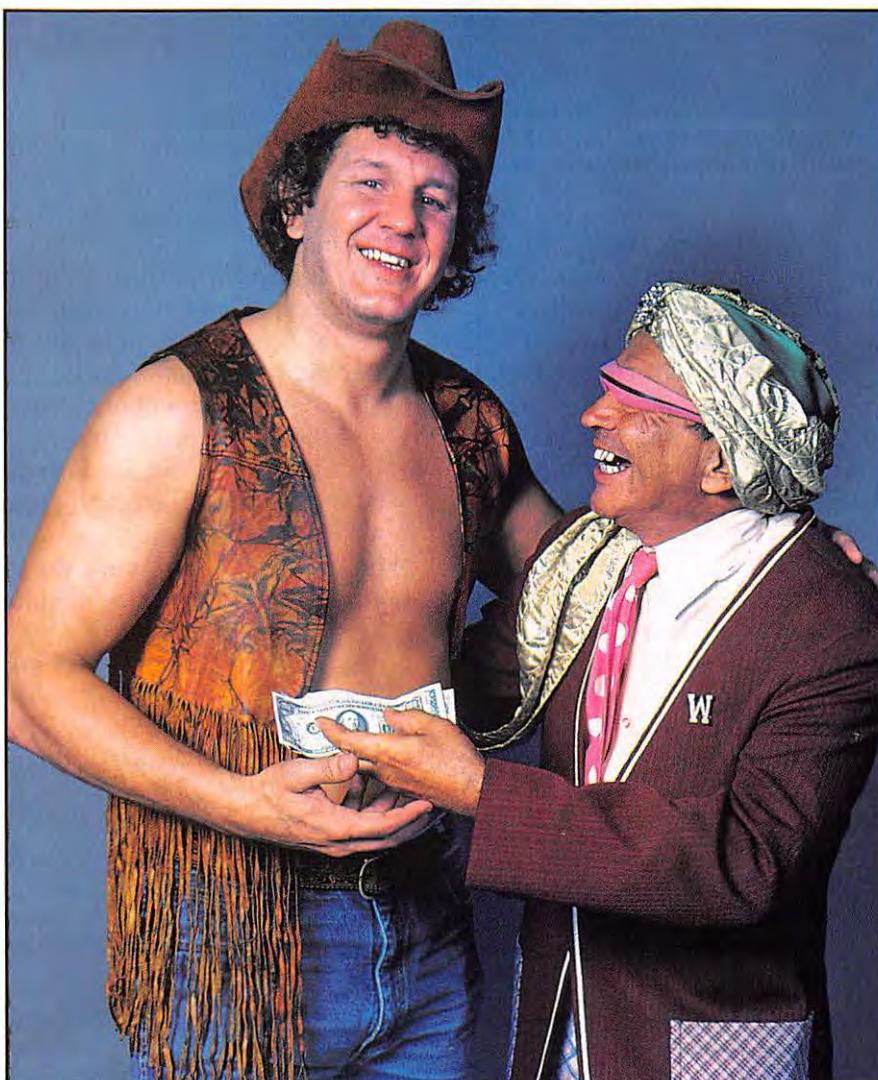
"During my first few years, I wasn't trying to set myself apart from my dad. I was just trying to learn how to perform."

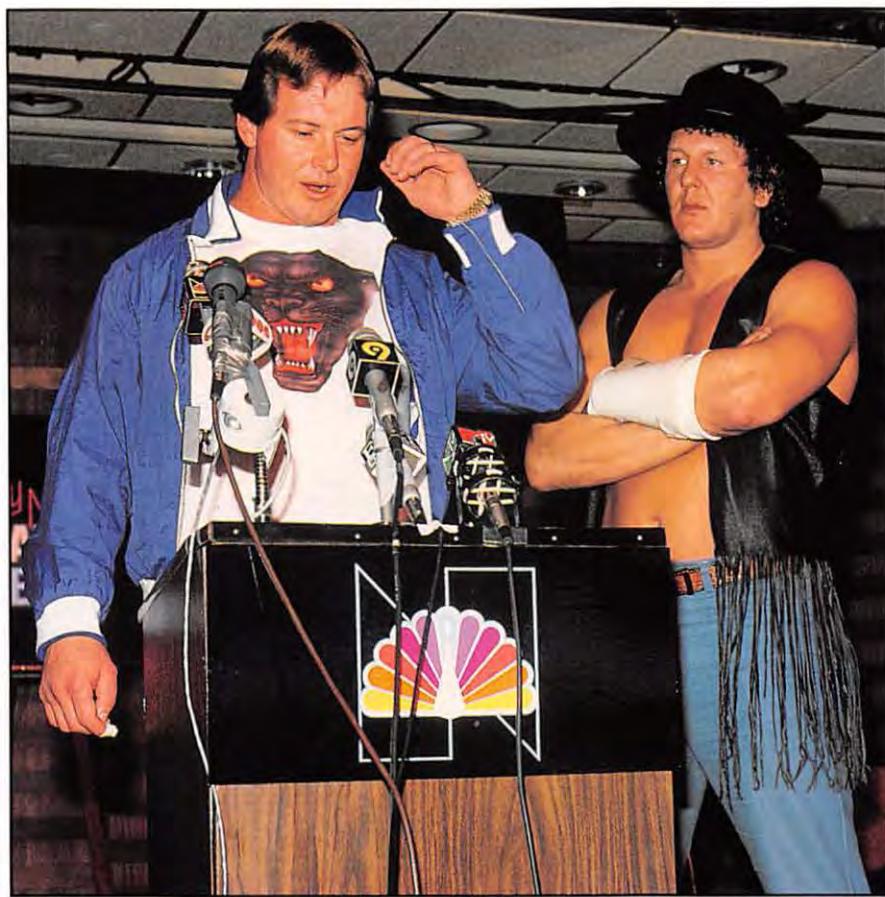
the time, you had turned heel and won the Florida tag team title with Bob Roop. Your father came into Florida and expressed concern about your recent behavior. But when Eddie and Mike Graham put Roop out of action with a severely injured knee, your father replaced Roop and the two of you went on a rampage. As a result, the Grahams and the Ortons had a series of father-son tag team matches.

A: I enjoyed that. It was a lot of fun. Bob Roop actually had to undergo knee surgery. Dad and I had a great time. We drew some good houses down there.

Q: Did you consciously try to distinguish yourself from your dad in terms of style? When did you become "Cowboy" Bob Orton?

A: During my first few years, I wasn't trying to set myself apart from my dad. I was just trying to learn how to perform. I didn't become a cowboy until I teamed with Dickie Slater up in Atlanta. "Playboy" Gary Hart was our manager, and he thought plain Bob Orton wasn't





What a thrill it was for Orton to be standing alongside Roddy Piper in the mid-1980s participating in mainstream media press conferences. And this was when he was already somewhat limited physically by a back injury.

enough, so he made me a cowboy. So I went out and bought some boots and a hat, and voila! The rest was history.

Q: It seems to me that your cowboy character was different from a lot of the other ones. You didn't come off as rough and tough, but more like arrogant and cunning. You reminded me of Dory and Terry Funk.

A: I worked with both of them on occasion, but we were rarely in the same place at the same time. If I resembled Dory or Terry Funk, it wasn't intentional. But I'm obviously flattered by the comparison because they were great workers. Really, though, I tried to do my own thing, like Randy is doing now.

Q: How much of your character, as far as the promos you gave, was an extension of your own personality?

A: Probably everything. What I did or said was usually an extension

of how I felt that day.

Q: I've noticed that Randy exudes a lot of that Orton smugness.

A: It's a family trait. He grew up watching me, so I'm not surprised that my style rubbed off on him.

Q: You were a henchman for many of the most despicable people in wrestling. You mentioned that you were in Gary Hart's stable, and you were one of Bobby Heenan's hired thugs, as well as Roddy Piper's bodyguard. How did you like that kind of role, as the rugged enforcer type? How many of those bounties did you collect, anyway?

A: I was happy to do whatever the promoters wanted, and to do whatever I could to make it work. I just enjoyed going out in front of a crowd and trying to steal the show every night. I didn't really give the angles a lot of thought. Those were just the pretext for me going out there and performing in the ring.

Q: If you could pick a time when you thought everything came together for you in terms of experience level and being at the peak of your game, when was that?

A: It was probably from 1976 to '83. Unfortunately, I hurt my back in '83 and could never really perform at the same level after that.

Q: Did you have an accident in the ring, or was it a nagging thing?

A: I was coming off the top rope to drop a knee on Wahoo McDaniel's face. I thought he'd probably get out of the way and I realized he wasn't going to. So I threw my leg back and caught him with my thigh instead of my knee, but still hit the mat with my other knee. That really, really wrenched me. The next day, I couldn't even get out of bed. I had morning and afternoon sessions with the back doctor for over a month, and I still tried to work every night. Slater and I were tag team partners at the time. Just walking to the ring was agony. So I'd just stand in the corner while Dickie worked the match.

Q: You teamed with Dick Slater in a number of territories over the years. I remember your run in the Mid-Atlantic area during the early-1980s in particular. What was Slater like as a partner?

A: I'm not bragging, but Dickie and I invented many of the double-team moves that other teams made popular later. We were doing many different kinds of double-team moves in the territories, without much exposure, in an era when teamwork meant just holding your hand out for a tag. Traditionally, it was always just one member of the team in the ring at a time. We were among the first to maximize the five-count so we could do double-team moves. So I'm honored that a lot of other teams, including The Road Warriors, did some of those moves when they got national exposure. They made a ton of money with those moves, so more

power to them. Remember when Animal would hold a guy while Hawk came off the top rope with a clothesline? Dickie and I were doing that for two years before the business went national.

Q: One of the more memorable angles I can remember involving you and Dick Slater took place in 1983. Ric Flair was supposed to wrestle Harley Race for the NWA World title at Starrcade. Race put a \$25,000 bounty on his head, so you turned on Flair and tried to collect the bounty. That's why I found the recent feud between Randy and Flair to be very interesting. Not even soap operas have the same continuity over the years. What goes through your mind when you see Randy and Flair facing off today?

A: When you combine the ideas that come from Creative along with the collective memory of the fans, you have something special. I think the thing between Randy and Ric is great. Randy gets to learn from one of the best. Again, he's in the right place at the right time, and he's got the right people around him. He absorbs this stuff like a sponge. It's truly fun to watch.

Q: I thought the promos between Randy and Flair were especially good. Promos were a strength of yours also. Don't ask me why, but you did a promo over 20 years ago that has stuck in my head ever since. It was during your run with Bob Backlund for the WWF title.

A: Yes, I think that was in 1982. We had a helluva match at Madison Square Garden. The Garden was



"Remember when Animal would hold a guy while Hawk came off the top rope with a clothesline? Dickie and I were doing that for two years before the business went national."



What long-time wrestling fan could ever forget that cast that Orton wore on his arm! That arm would never heal, although the cast made for a very fine weapon at the most opportune times.

always a great place to work, and we had 'em rockin' and rollin'.

Q: In the promo I remember, you just exuded that cockiness I was talking about. You said that when you won the WWF title, you would work toward the "betterment" of wrestling. You said, "I bet people don't even think 'betterment' is a word, but that just shows how smart I am. And if it isn't a word, it should be." As a kid, I wondered if "betterment" was a word, so I looked it up in the dictionary and, sure enough, it was an actual word. So you were correct.

A: All right! That would've been the first time I used the right word. I don't remember that promo, but I can definitely see myself saying something like that.

Q: At that time, The Grand Wizard was your manager. What kind of person was he?

A: I enjoyed working with Ernie [Roth] because he was just a great guy, a lot of fun to be with. He had a fantastic mind for the



Orton played the role of the rough, tough, and arrogant cowboy very well, using his fists to full advantage against such stars as David Von Erich (above) and Rick McGraw (right) over the years.

business, and he was a sharp dresser, too. It's a shame he passed away so soon after that.

Q: In that era, the manager they paired you with usually said a lot about you. If you were a primitive, drooling type, they put you with Lou Albano. If you were some kind of monster, they would put you with Fred Blassie. And all the smarter wrestlers with some finesse went with The Grand Wizard.

A: Yeah, I can see that. It's perfectly logical the way you describe it. I've never thought about it.

Q: Also at that time, you used the superplex as a finisher. That was a really innovative, flashy finisher in that era.

A: That was Mr. Fuji's idea, to be honest with you. The first wrestler to do the superplex was based in Minnesota. He died of

brain cancer I believe.

Q: You're talking about Scott Irwin.

A: We did a show in Duluth one night, and Scott came to visit the guys in the locker room. He was pretty sick. We laughed and joked about the fact that I was using his move. He was a great guy. I hated to see something like that happen to him, but that's life. He really appreciated the fact that I was doing the superplex. I think it made him proud.

Q: I appreciate you correcting the record because I always assumed you were the first to use the superplex. Unfortunately, where I lived, I didn't get to see Scott Irwin very much.

A: That's exactly the point I was making about Slater and I as a tag team. There were so many wrestlers out there in the 1970s and early-'80s who were being very



innovative in this business, but so much of the credit usually goes to the guys who became huge stars in the mid-'80s. So many people assume that wrestling evolved when it went national. But there were guys plugging away in their local territories—without the benefit of national TV—who were advancing the business.

Q: For so many of today's fans, the '70s is really a dark period. You began your career in Florida. Where else did you go?

A: I worked in Florida and Georgia at first, and then I worked in Minneapolis and Knoxville, Ten-

nessee. After that, I went to Louisiana for a really short period. Then it was on to New York, then the Carolinas, and back to New York again. That about covers my whole career.

Q: Who would you say was the wrestler who brought out the best in you in the ring, your greatest opponent?

A: There were so many great guys back then. I can't remember anybody who wasn't fun to work with. There was Brisco, Backlund, hell, I could give you a whole list. This may sound strange, but I loved working with Andre.



"So many people assume that wrestling evolved when it went national. But there were guys plugging away in their local territories—without the benefit of national TV—who were advancing the business."



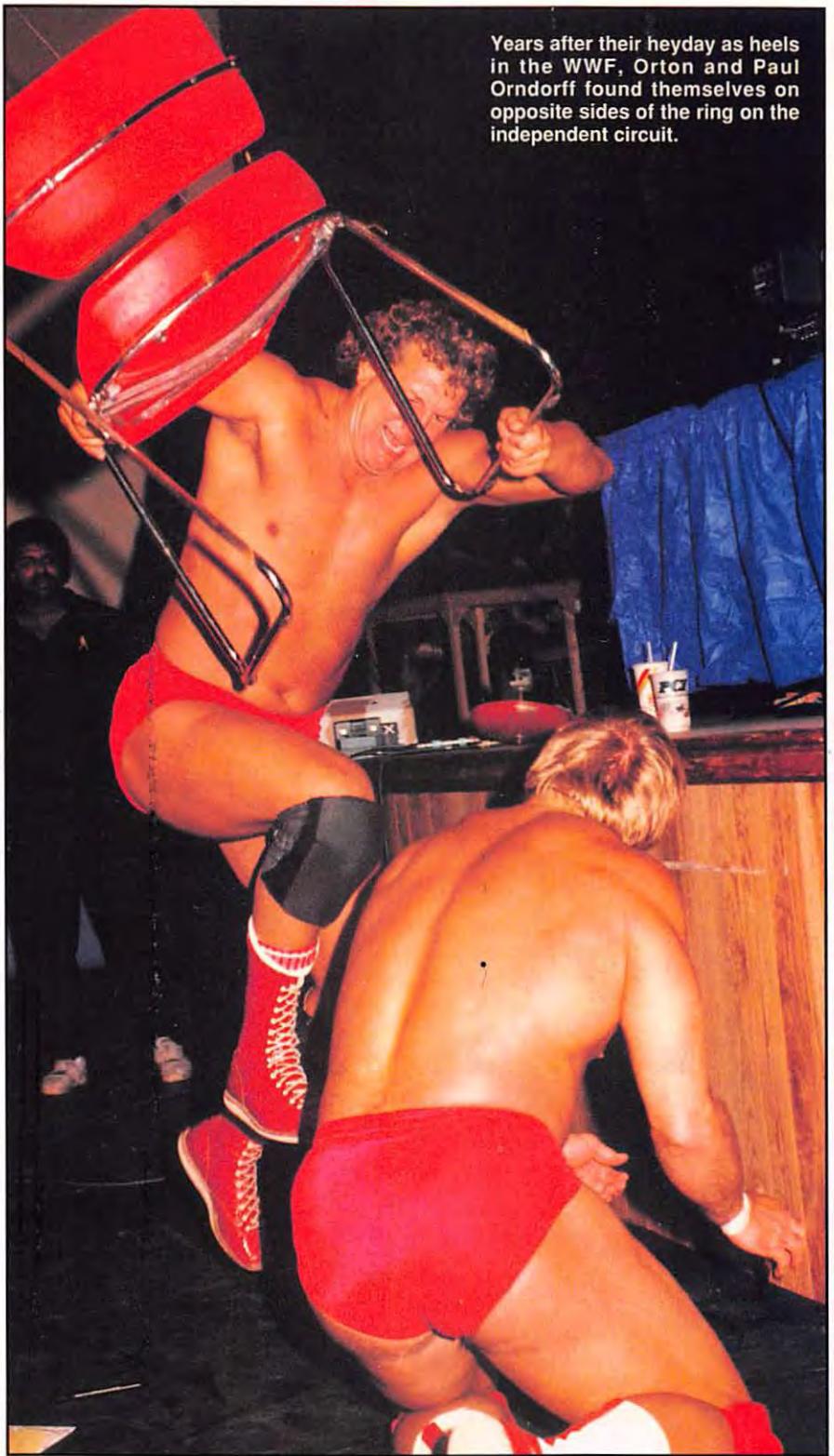
Orton enjoys a playful moment at home in Georgia with his dog in this photo taken in 1975. How young he looked!

Q: What were the logistics of working a match against a guy that big?

A: It wasn't hard at all because he was a pro like everyone else. He knew how to work a match and entertain the crowd. We had a very good match. Fortunately, there's a tape of our match at the Garden that still exists.

Q: I realize you were a veteran at that point, but weren't there butterflies in your stomach when you went into the ring against him, just in case he accidentally fell on top of you or something?

A: No, never. When I first started my career, I always had butterflies. Later on, that goes away because your mind is on so many different things. You don't have time to be nervous. Although, I must admit, I had to relieve myself real quick before my matches. But that's where the nervousness stopped. Then you start thinking about what



Years after their heyday as heels in the WWF, Orton and Paul Orndorff found themselves on opposite sides of the ring on the independent circuit.

you're going to do out there and which way you want to go. Once you're out there, you see how the fans react to what you're doing and you adjust your match accordingly. At least that's the way I approached it. I'm sure everybody has their own way of handling it.

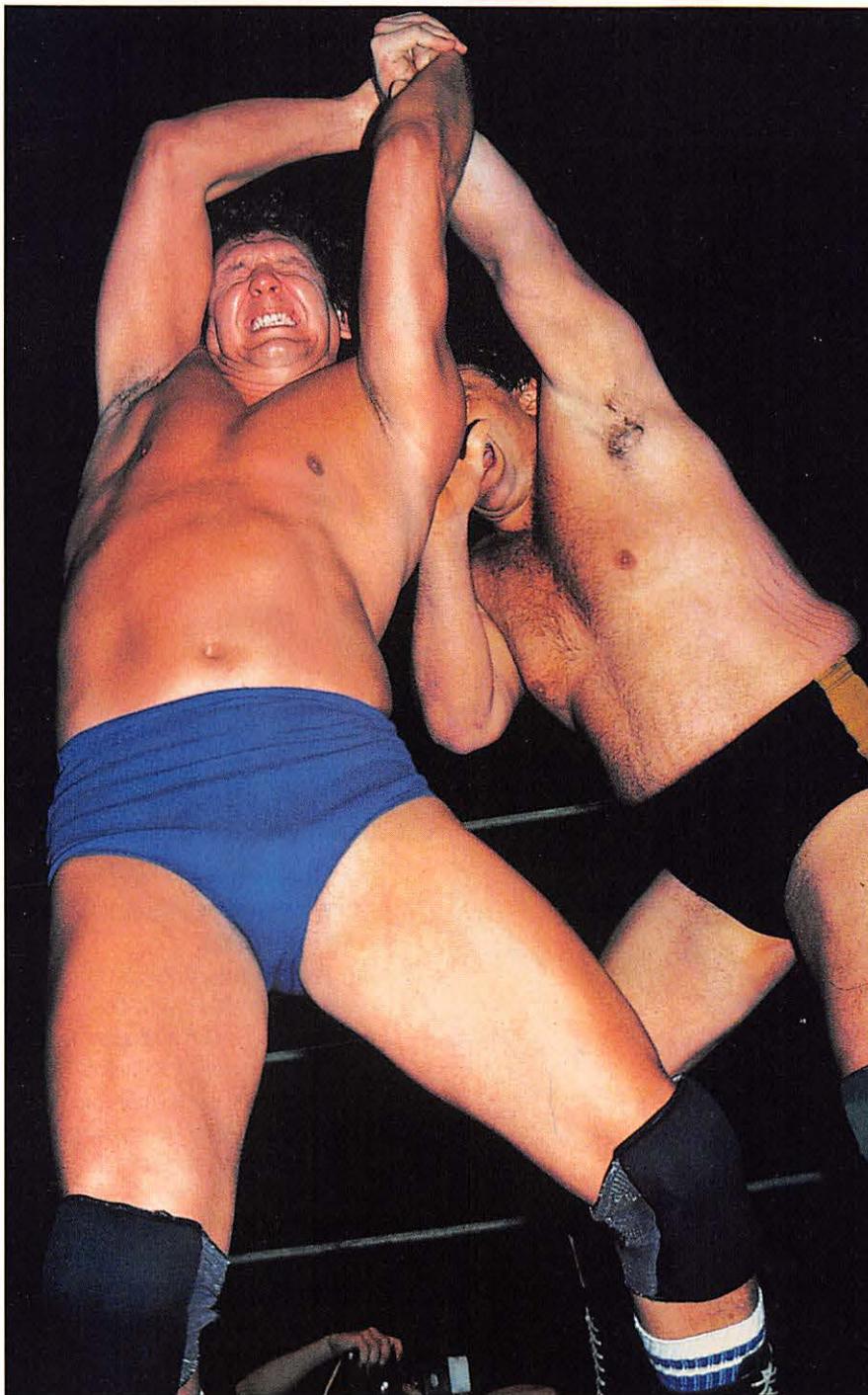
Q: Here's an even harder question. What do you remember as being your best match, or at least the one you remember the most?

A: Oh, the match with Backlund in the Garden. And that's because it took place at Madison Square Garden. Just making that arena

was a high point in your career. Actually, the tag team matches really stand out in my mind. Me and Roop had great matches against Mike Graham and Steve Keirn in Florida. And me and Dickie had great matches with Greg Gagne and Jim Brunzell up in the Minneapolis area, as well as against Rick Steamboat and Jay Youngblood, and Jay and his brother, Mark, in the Carolinas. Jay was a wonderful wrestler, and it's a shame he died at such an early age down in Australia. Oh, and I can't forget Eddie Graham. Any match against Eddie was fantastic. I had a lot of great matches in my career, and that was due to the quality of the guys across the ring.

Q: It's amazing to think that some of your opponents, like Graham, started out in the '50s. We could talk a lot about how wrestling has changed a lot in the 30 years since you started. But it seems to me that the major change really took place between, say, '82 and '85. So how would you say working in the wrestling business changed from '82, when you were wrestling Backlund, to '85, when you were boxing Mr. T?

A: Just the hype, that's all. My opinion is the major difference was the use of music, with ring entrances and videos. That was a small change that made a huge difference in terms of presentation. What the guys did inside the ring didn't change that much between those years. Now, I think the work inside the ring has changed tremendously since '85. But, basically, I think the only change was the music and the glitter. Yet even that was rekindling what had been done for years, with Gorgeous George and some others. Also, before that, there were only one or two guys who had that "something extra" with their gimmick, and all the other wrestlers were pretty basic. In '85, everybody had a weird gimmick. Today, there's a lot more high-flying and high-risk



Orton was in his prime at a time when wrestling was undergoing some major changes and evolving into a national phenomenon. In 1983, he was brawling with the ultra-tough Adrian Adonis. A few years later, he was on the set of an effeminate Adonis' "Flower Shop."

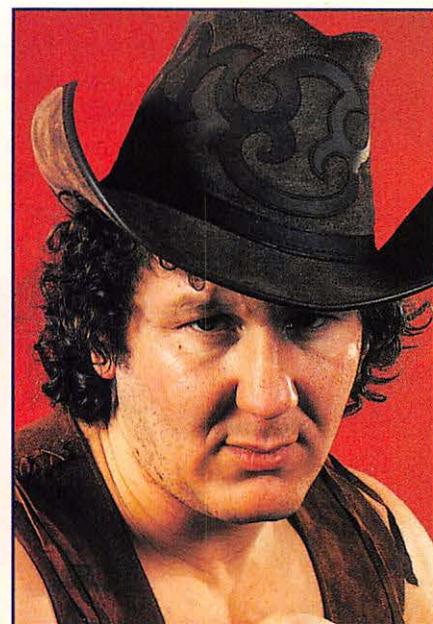
moves, but that's just the nature of the beast. Now I think that stuff is used too often and devalued in the process. All fans want is a good, hard-fought match and you don't have to risk breaking your neck to do that. That said, wrestling has to continue to develop and evolve.

Q: You did a heck of a lot of main events on the WWF's syndicat-

ed shows and on Saturday Night's Main Event in the mid-'80s, when wrestling was so hot. Didn't you box Mr. T on Saturday Night's Main Event?

A: Yes, I boxed Mr. T on a *Saturday Night's Main Event* from Arizona, and the main event of the first *Saturday Night's Main Event* was me and Hogan.

Q: My point is that you had one of



"All fans want is a good, hard-fought match and you don't have to risk breaking your neck to do that."

the highest profiles in the WWF, as far as free TV was concerned. Compared to you, Roddy Piper and Hulk Hogan didn't wrestle on TV very often.

A: That's true. But there were a lot of other guys who filled those spots on TV. Greg Valentine wrestled in televised main events a lot, and he was one of the best workers ever.

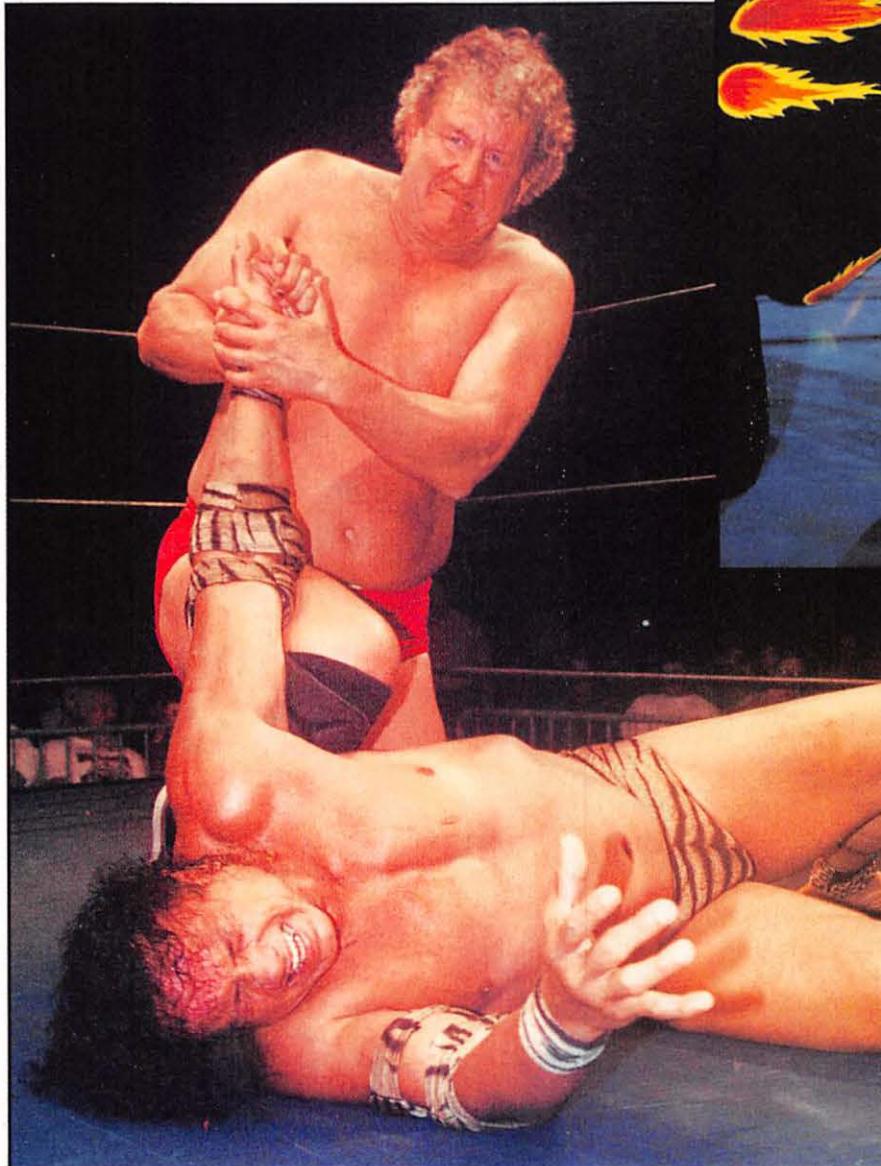
Q: What was Mr. T like to work with?

A: He seemed like a really fine fella. He grew up as a wrestling fan and, as a result, he had an appreciation for the business. Having a respect for the business is the first step toward being successful in it, whether you have a 30-year career or just make a few special appearances.

Q: Yes, Mr. T talked about his appreciation for wrestling in his autobiography, which was published about 20 years ago. Of course, also during that era, you were Roddy Piper's bodyguard. How did you get along with Piper?

A: He was a great guy and fun to be around. I think his promos were up there with the best ever. Most of all, though, it was the attitude he exhibited every moment he was on TV or at the arena. He never fell out of character. An important point is that the fans

It's been about 17 years since "Cowboy" Bob called himself a full-time active wrestler. You still might get lucky and see him somewhere on the circuit, though, perhaps taking on a fellow veteran such as Bam Bam Bigelow (right) or Jimmy Snuka (below).



hated Roddy, but they also loved him. They loved to hate him, so to speak.

Q: I agree. You were quite a fixture on the "Piper's Pit" interview segments. When Piper went to Hollywood and started his movie career, didn't you stay with Adrian Adonis for a while in "The Flower Shop"?

A: Yeah, I was with Adrian for a short while.

Q: Were those the kind of moments when you thought, *Boy, this business has really changed?*

A: (Laughs) Like I said, I was just trying to do the best I could. Whatever the promoters gave me, I tried to do the best I could with it. I think that's the mark of being a professional.

Q: I'd be remiss if I didn't you ask you this question: How is your

arm these days? Your recuperative powers were rather slow with that injury.

A: Oh, you know, it still bothers me once in a while. But it doesn't hurt me as bad as my back, knees, and neck (laughs). I think that cast was on my arm for over a year.

Q: Which period of your career did you enjoy the most? Or, which promotion was the best, as far as having a fun time?

A: Minnesota was nice because I only worked three nights a week, and we flew almost everywhere instead of driving. That allowed me to spend a lot of time home with my wife. But there was no comparison to New York. The WWF was always so high class and so smooth. New York was just a really pleasurable place to be. And it didn't hurt that I made pretty good darn money, too.

Q: That never hurts, does it?

A: No.

Q: As a fan who didn't see the early part of your career, it seems to me that as far as having a high profile and really being able to demonstrate all of

your talent, your peak run was probably against Backlund in '82. You weren't in a tag team or part of a group. It was just you. Would you agree with that assessment?

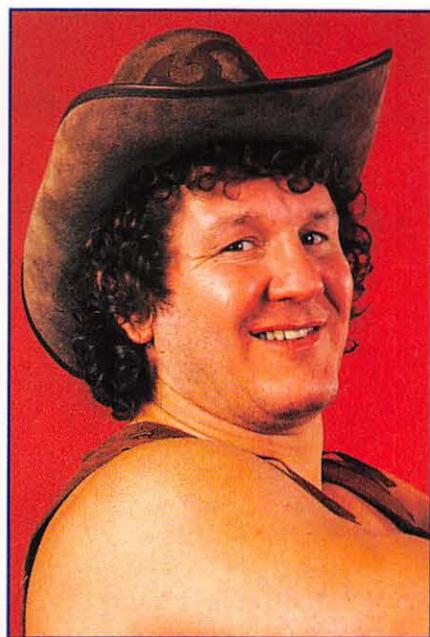
A: Yes, I would—as far as my career was concerned. But in terms of my greatest personal satisfaction, I enjoyed my accomplishments in Florida the best. I had my first successes there, including a reign as Florida heavyweight champion. That was pretty cool for me because I had grown up in Florida and was a big fan of Eddie Graham. I won the belt from Jack

Brisco, another one of my heroes. Also, my dad was Florida champion at one time, so all of that combined to make it a special experience for me. That was the time when I was in awe of everything and thought to myself, *Wow I can't believe I'm lucky enough to be in this business.* I'm sure Randy had the same experience at the Garden, just like I did wrestling at the Fort Homer Hesterly Armory in Tampa for the first time. That was my Madison Square Garden when I was Randy's age.

Q: Down there in Florida, were you



Although the superplex was considered a high spot when he was in his prime, Orton was never particularly flashy in the ring, instead preferring a grounded, more conservative style. He's noticing his son beginning to appreciate and embrace such an approach as well.



"Although I did fairly well in the barroom fights, I figured I'd better quit while I was ahead."

recognized very much outside the ring, when you would go into a bar or the grocery store? I assume the fans' reactions to wrestlers were probably different back then. Today, when fans run into a wrestler, it's like running into a movie star. Back then, they were probably half-way afraid of you.

A: A lot of people watched wrestling in Florida. I was a target for a lot of barroom bullies because I was never really muscular and because I was such a young man. So I had a lot of guys try me. After a while, I learned not to go into those places where people would try to pick fights with me. Although I did fairly well in the barroom fights, I figured I'd better quit while I was ahead.

Q: Speaking of quitting while you're ahead, when did you make the decision to pull back from full-time wrestling and just wrestle part-time or make the special appearances? And did your injuries influence your decision?

A: It happened in 1987, on my birthday. I went to Japan for the next four or five years, where I would wrestle about 12 to 15 weeks out of the year. My back was really bad and I got to the point where I was taking pain pills way too much and drinking way too much. Fortunately, those things aren't part of my life anymore, and I'm glad to have that behind me.

Q: On that topic, a lot has been made of what the WWF was like in the mid-'80s. Have the rumors of drug use and alcoholism been exaggerated, or was it about as bad as the rumors indicate?

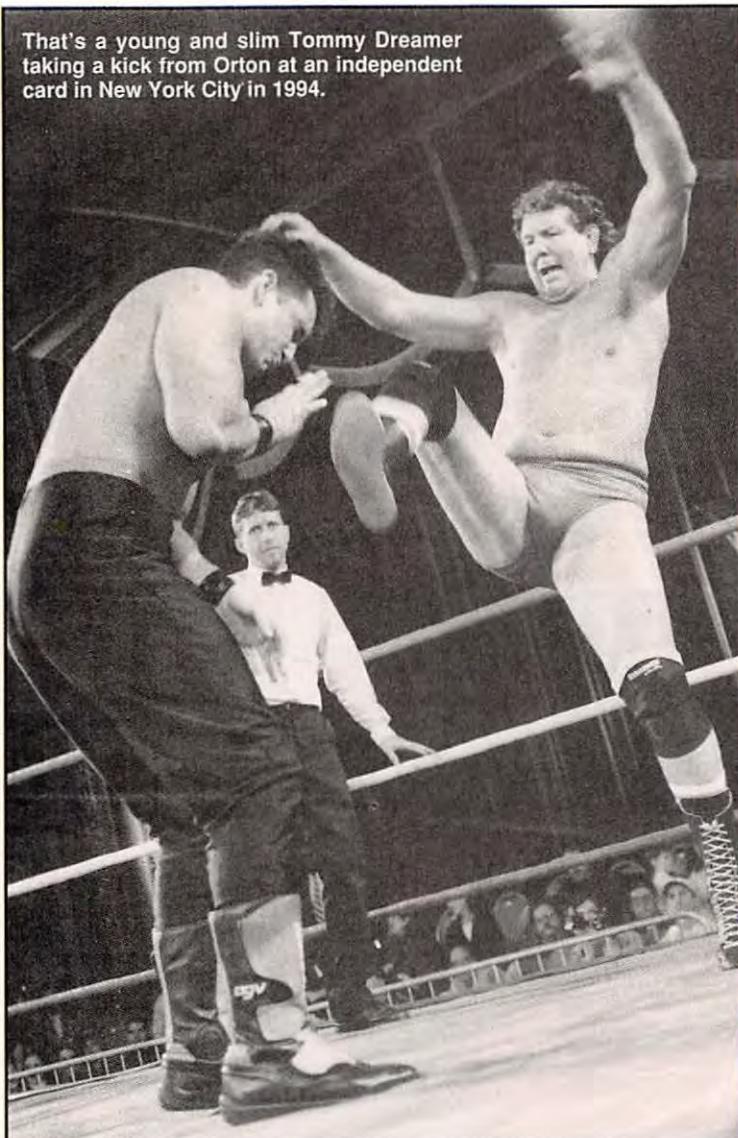
A: There were guys who didn't do that stuff, so it was a matter of choice, not necessity. I don't know what you've heard, but just like anywhere else, there are folks doing it and others who didn't. That happened a long time ago. And, shoot, I don't remember the particulars because I was on pain pills and Heineken.

Q: How are you keeping busy these days?

A: I sell used cars.

Q: Several months ago, I did a 60-minute interview with Rick Steamboat and asked him about his life after wrestling. He owns a boat repair shop in North Carolina. He explained that customers see his picture on the wall, look at him, then look back at the picture, and back at him again. They say, "Are you really Ricky Steamboat?" Then they talk about wrestling for the next 15 minutes until he has to say, "Okay,

That's a young and slim Tommy Dreamer taking a kick from Orton at an independent card in New York City in 1994.



so what's wrong with your boat?" Do you have that same experience trying to sell cars?

A: Not as much as you would think. I have a poster of Randy on the wall, and a shot or two of me. A lot of folks know Randy right away and they think I'm a wrestling fan. So, no, they don't recognize me at all. When I first started selling cars in '96, a lot of people recognized me. But now my hair is gray and I wear glasses. I also have chest of drawers disease.

Q: What kind of disease is that?

A: My chest is now in my drawers. I must admit, though, a lot of people recognize my voice before they recognize my face.

Q: I can understand that. Your gravelly voice is distinctive. I would think the fact that you

were a known commodity would give you a leg up on selling cars. Wouldn't wrestling fans want Bob Orton to sell them cars?

A: I'm sure it helps, but if they didn't like me, it might have hurt a bit.

Q: Like big Hulk Hogan fans?

A: Yes (laughs). But my hours are good and I have plenty of time to play golf. I shot an 85 the other day. I wanted to break 80, though, so I didn't do nearly as well as I would've liked. I'm a little better around the greens, so it all works out.

Q: When did you take that up?

A: I've been playing golf since I was 12 or 13 years old. By the way, my younger son, Nathan, is wrestling in high school, so

I pay a lot of attention to that.

Q: Do you think he'll ever get into pro wrestling?

A: I don't know. That'll be entirely up to him. He's only 16, and he's close to a straight-A student, so I think he'll be going to college. I've never seen anybody do so many slow chin-ups, so I think he'll be a pretty good-sized boy. He's not quite as heavy as Randy at that age, although he runs a lot. Randy didn't run much because he had problems with his shins. So we'll just wait and see what happens. I'll stand behind Nathan no matter what he decides, but he's got to make his own choices.

Q: Do you wrestle very often these days?

A: I wrestle for a couple of different promotions, including Terry Lan-



Orton used a metal briefcase to help son Randy take care of Rico at an OVW card in 2001 (above). Father and son embraced when it was over (left). Surprisingly, WWE has yet to call to ask him to get involved in his son's affairs on TV some Monday night.

Roman defended the IWF title against Shane O'Brien. And the second night, I was in Roman's corner when he wrestled O'Brien in a bullrope match. I try not to get carried away in the ring, although I do like to do tag team and six-man tag team matches. Of course, I enjoy doing autograph signings and things like that. Right now, I'm also negotiating to wrestle Rocky Johnson down in

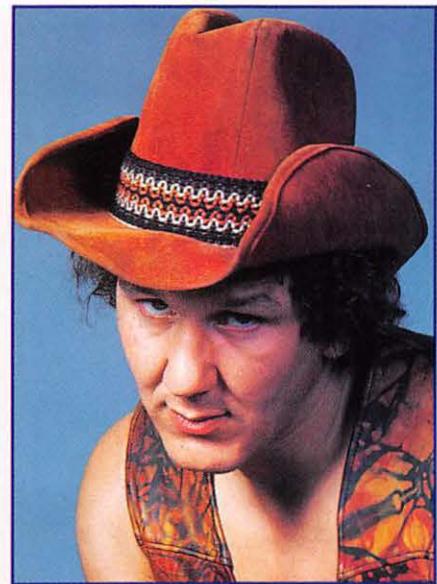
Florida, yet I don't know whether that will be a singles or a tag team match at this point.

Q: I wonder if he can still do the Ali shuffle.

A: I can't wait to find out. I know Rocky has stayed in great shape.

Q: I'd like to ask you one final

dell's group, Tennessee Mountain Wrestling, and Midwest Powerhouse Wrestling. A few weeks ago, I did two shows for the Independent Wrestling Federation in New Jersey. The first night, I was the special referee when



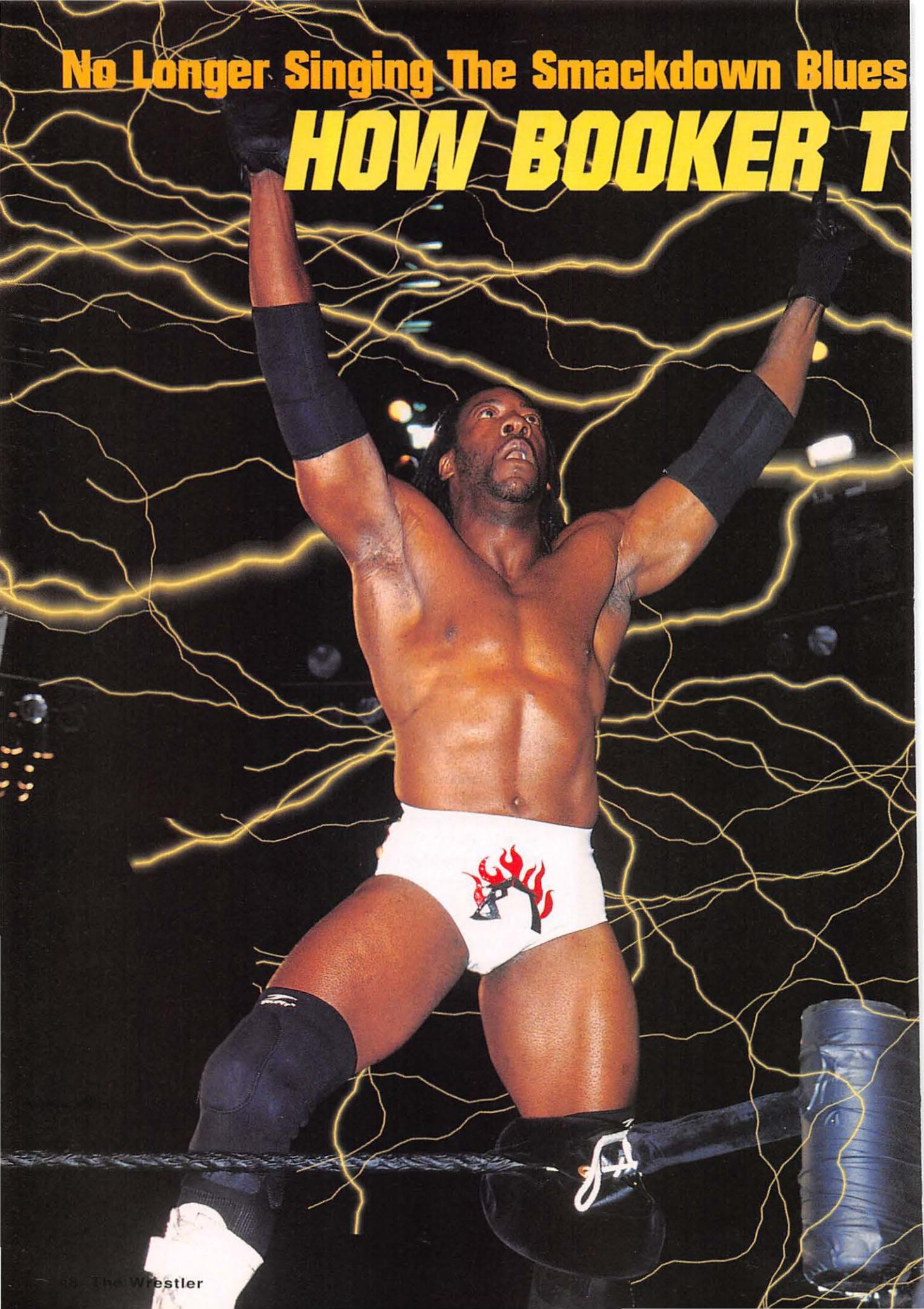
"I Randy's! smartened up now and is employing some old-time stuff into his matches and doing less risky moves now. I think the crowd really likes that style, too."

question. Obviously, you follow your son's career very closely. Based on everything you know and the experience you've gained, what is the most important advice you could give to Randy at this stage of his career?

A: Stay healthy. He's already had some injuries. We thought the shoulder surgery he had a while back might end his career right then. He's also had his share of concussions at such a young age. He should just avoid getting hurt. And I know that's tough because you usually don't have much control over that. He's smartened up now and is employing some old-time stuff into his matches and doing less risky moves now. I think the crowd really likes that style, too. He loves going to the gym, and that will help him avoid injuries. He just keeps getting better in that ring. At this pace, if he stays healthy, there's no stopping him. □

No Longer Singing The Smackdown Blues

HOW BOOKER T



REGAINED HIS SPARK

For more than half a year, Booker T complained about being forced to wrestle for Smackdown. Now, finally, he has realized that it could be just the kind of opportunity he has been looking for all along

By Frank Krewda

FLIP-FLOPPING ON his convictions didn't serve John Kerry well on the campaign trail in the fall, but apparently Booker T didn't notice. He was too busy going through some changes of his own.

After making a reluctant leap from Raw to Smackdown courtesy of Mr. McMahon's draft lottery just eight days after WrestleMania XX, Booker was about as politically incorrect as an employee could be. Essentially, Booker T was miserable about going to Smackdown ... and fiercely determined to make every-

one around him know just how miserable he was and, in turn, make them every bit as miserable as he was.

He clashed with his boss, then-Smackdown General Manager Kurt Angle. He clashed with his co-workers, namely Eddie Guerrero, who was among the first Smackdown performers to take exception to Booker's prickly disposition. And he clashed with the Smackdown fans, many of whom he insulted by referring to Smackdown as WWE's "B" team.

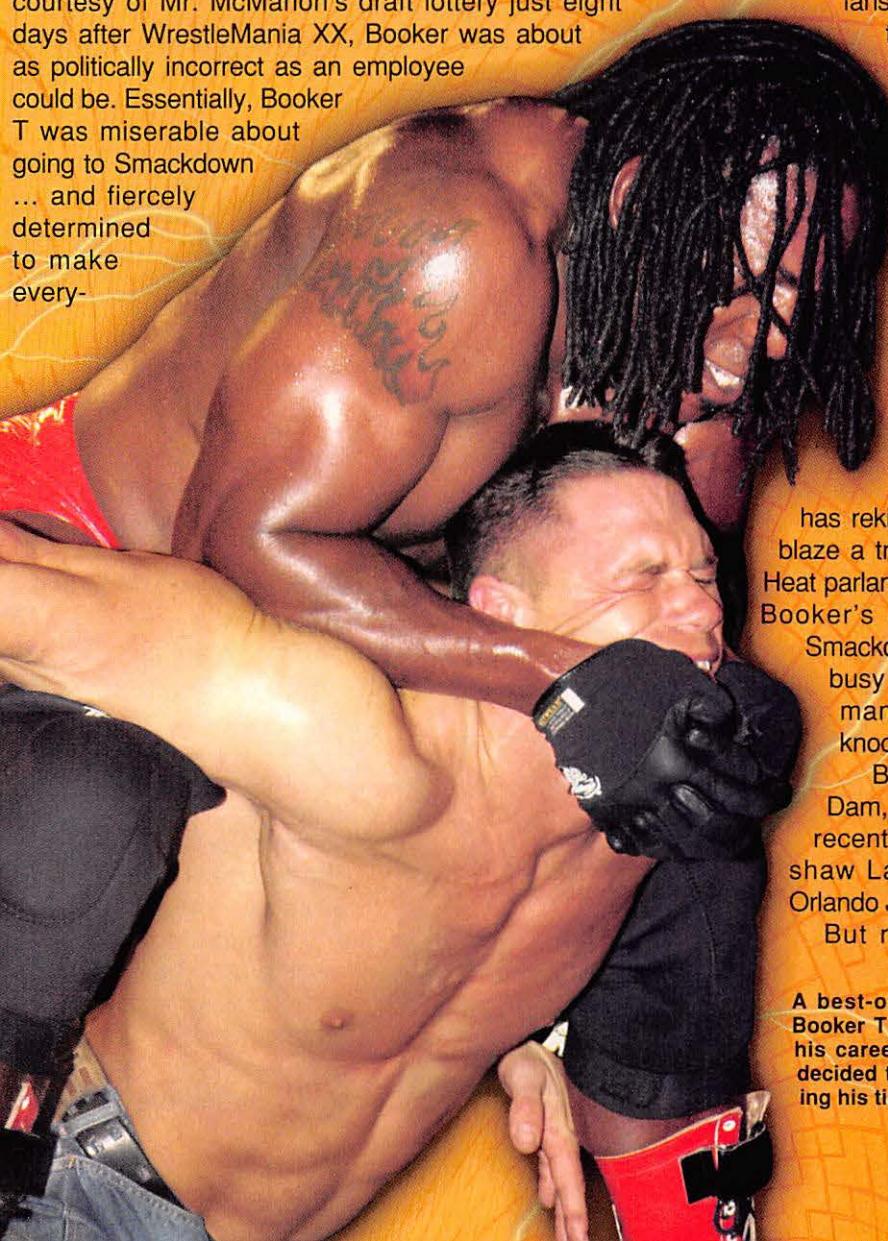
"Man, it seemed like I just got finished fighting Triple-H for the [Raw] title," Booker recalled. "Me and RVD had something good goin' as a tag team. I had some unfinished business with Raw. Then they sent me to Siberia. That's what I called Smackdown. You know, Siberia, where they send people off to die in exile."

But just as a few lonesome years on the frozen Asian tundra can give men an opportunity to reflect and change, Booker's time on Smackdown has been a time for growth and maturity. Booker has rekindled a spark that might soon help him blaze a trail to that brand's world title. In Harlem Heat parlance, Booker got his groove back. Not that Booker's had time to "reflect" since joining Smackdown. On the contrary, he's been a very busy man. Guerrero was merely the first of many Smackdown performers looking to knock him down a peg.

Booker has also feuded with Rob Van Dam, John Cena, The Undertaker, and most recently, Smackdown champion John Bradshaw Layfield and his chief of staff/lackey, Orlando Jordan.

But rather than cry about some kind of

A best-of-five series for the U.S. title ended with Booker T not getting the U.S. title and not advancing his career at all. Instead of continuing to mope, he decided to try something that actually has him enjoying his time with Smackdown.





It sure looks like JBL wants no part of Booker ... and we can understand why. The Book has shown no fear in standing up to him and his chief of staff on national TV and has a lot of momentum (and people) on his side.

Smackdown conspiracy to keep him down, Booker has quietly become reinvigorated by the new challenges and opportunities he's encountered. All but gone is the bitter, disgruntled employee. In his place is a spirited WWE superstar who's mentally and physically prepared to capitalize on his abilities.

What make Booker's transformation so remarkable are the circumstances under which it has occurred. Events have rarely broken in his favor. Nagging injuries and illness, a brief but unspectacular run with the U.S. title (which he lost to Cena in a best-of-five series that ended at No Mercy), and a particularly lopsided feud with The Undertaker actually had Booker pondering retirement more seriously than ever early this fall.

So what—or who—was it that turned Booker's attitude around?

"With tangible goals in sight, Booker now regards his assignment on Smackdown as an opportunity to become a world champion again (he was the WCW World champion at the time WCW was bought out by WWE in 2001), not some interminable stretch in the Soviet GULAG."

"I talked to Stevie Ray," Booker said. "Hey, man, he's my brother and he's been with me from the beginning. If I can't get good advice from my big brother, who else can I go to?"

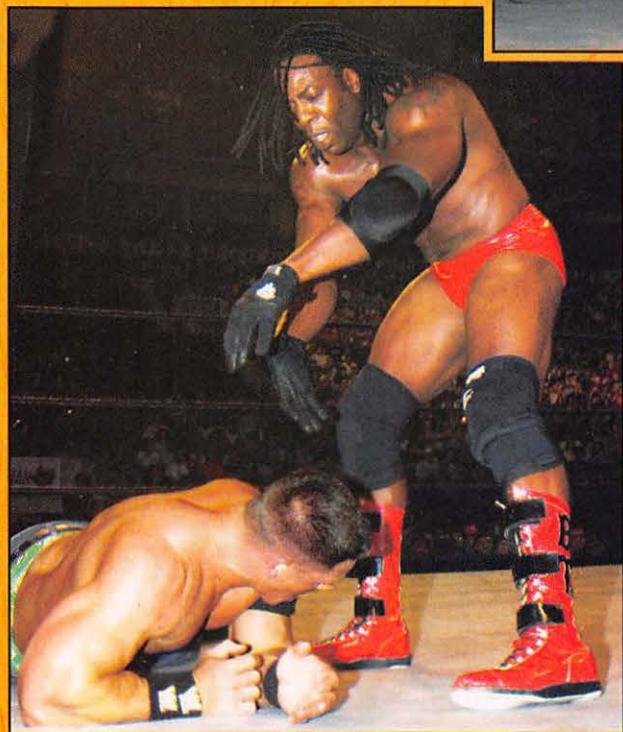
Drawing on that fraternal bond, Stevie Ray spoke directly to Booker's soul. "Basically, I told Booker that he still has unfinished business on Smackdown and Raw," he offered. "He couldn't just quit after getting whooped by The

Undertaker and John Cena. He's too good to go out like that. And who knows, he might get another shot at Triple-H on Raw someday."

Booker credits Stevie for giving him the motivation he needed to rededicate himself to wrestling, and for adopting a more positive mindset toward Smackdown and his career. With tangible goals in sight, Booker now regards his assign-



His big chance to win a world title in WWE came and went at WrestleMania XIX. Well, at least on the Raw side. When he couldn't defeat Triple-H on WWE's biggest stage (above), he was pushed back down to the mid-card. The trade to Smackdown, where he can pursue JBL (right), could yet work out to Booker's advantage.



We don't expect to see Booker palling around with John Cena like they're the closest of friends now that he has turned fan favorite. It's just nice to see him no longer acting so utterly miserable.

ment on Smackdown as an opportunity to become a world champion again (he was the WCW World champion at the time WCW was bought out by WWE in 2001), not some interminable stretch in the Soviet GULAG.

To drink from the championship cup once more, Booker made it a point to target current champ JBL by going through his sidekick, Jordan. Well, to be accurate, it was Jordan who got in Booker's face first, but Booker saw an opportunity and was quick to respond.

"That's another thing Stevie stressed. Why am I getting all bogged down fighting The Undertaker and Cena? If I want to be the number-one guy, I got to go after the big dog, JBL. Hey, I knew I wasn't getting another shot at Triple-H anytime soon, so that sucka JBL better watch his back."

Booker knows he will have to make due with each and every chance he gets to get inside Layfield's head. JBL has



shown himself to be vulnerable, but with Jordan around to run interference for him, separating him from the 15 pounds of gold around his waist has proven to be a lot more difficult to beat than most imagined. Not even Undertaker has been able to get that job done, and now he has moved on to Heidenreich. This could prove to be a long chase.

"If that's the way it's gotta work, then that's okay. I'll just take my time and build a file on him," Booker said. "The more I know about him, the better off I'll be when I get my chance to move in for the kill."

It also helps that the Smackdown fans have chosen to forget about the bitter Raw transplant who tried so hard to infuriate them with his sophomoric petulance. Now it appears he'll have plenty of fan support as he prepares to take on the wildly unpopular JBL. It's an element of the support network Booker admits he misses.

"Hey, I'm like everybody else, man. My job's easier when I don't have thousands of people cussing and insulting me every night. Besides, they're dying to see JBL taken out. If I'm the guy to give them what they want, that's cool. I can dig that."

The fans can dig that, too. So far, it seems he's won their hearts and minds. More importantly, he's figured out what's in his own heart and mind and is once again happy doing what he's doing, even if it is for the "B" team. □

SHAWN MICHAELS' MISSION TO MAKE CHRISTIAN A BORN-AGAIN WRESTLER

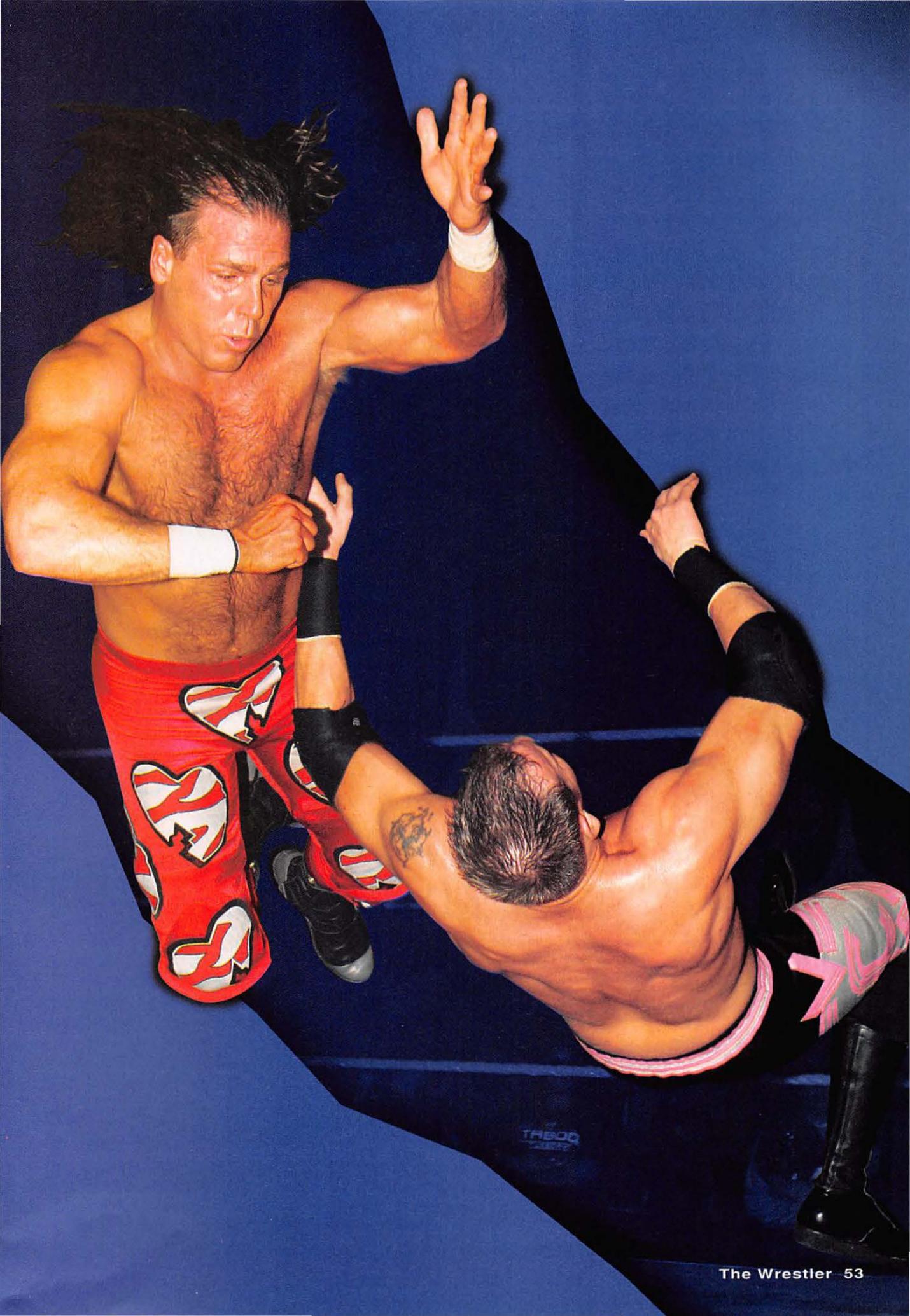
You'd think from watching them on TV that Shawn Michaels can't stand Christian. Is that true? Yes and no. He can't stand to watch Christian act the way he does now. But he sees something special beneath that cocky demeanor—something that reminds him of ... him

By Will Welsh

SHAWN MICHAELS THOUGHT he was watching himself circa 1997. The moves were his—or at least similar to his. They were crisp and sharp, yet they were also performed with a flair that belied the power behind them. The confident strut had an unfamiliar gait, but it also had a swagger that reminded him of his own San Antonio two-step.

The chip on the shoulder was there for all to see.

This guy knew he was the center of attention, and he rejoiced in



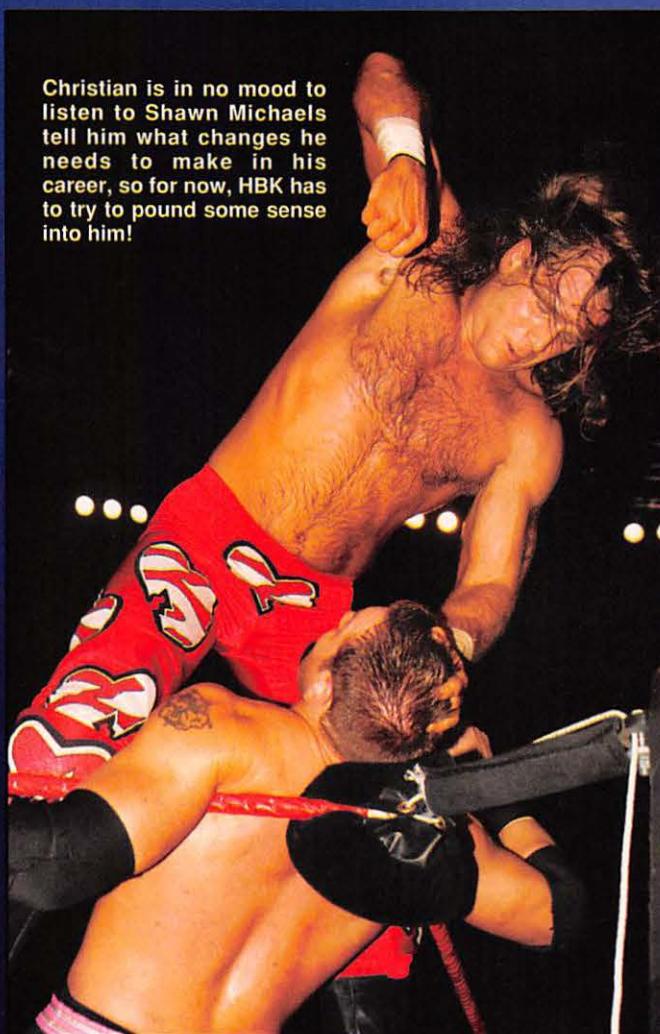
that fact, which was yet another similarity between the two men. In fact, the wrestler's overall attitude had a certain HBK-esque quality to it. *Maybe he isn't as raunchy as I was during my days leading DeGeneration X*, Michaels thought, *but the kid certainly knows how to have a good time. Just look at him manipulate the crowd! He's really loving it!*

Michaels watched the wrestler pose and preen in front of the sellout crowd. He listened as the wrestler made fun of the local yokels with snide remarks that were witty and creative enough to be charming but derisive enough to instill disdain. The highlight of his monologue was when he called the fans "his peeps." Michaels couldn't help but laugh at the ludicrous statement, especially considering the catcalls emanating from the front few rows.

"Cocky is as cocky does," Michaels said, thinking aloud.

Behind all the showmanship, though, Michaels recognized one more aspect of the wrestler's makeup that reminded him of himself: wonderful natural talent. The kind of talent that, if molded correctly, could spawn a career that

Christian is in no mood to listen to Shawn Michaels tell him what changes he needs to make in his career, so for now, HBK has to try to pound some sense into him!



All kinds of posturing and trash-talking before the match didn't give Christian as much of an edge as he thought it would against HBK. He was beaten cleanly in their first singles match in October. Sounds like Michaels would like to face him again, though.

future generations of wrestlers would envy.

The kind of career that could make so many men happy and so many more men jealous.

Michaels laughed. He'd always heard that Christian was nothing to worry too much about. "All mouth and no guts," is what a few of his backstage friends had told him.

I wonder if that's what the establishment said about me when I was on the cusp of breaking through, Michaels thought.

Shawn Michaels is a changed man. He's not the wrestler who used to sacrifice match strategy for a few well-timed antics. He's also given up childish humor and the relief that it can sometimes provide. Instead, he's devoted his life to God—a life change that has made him approach wrestling 180 degrees differently than he used to.

The sport used to be Michaels' be-all and end-all. It was an obsession. It consumed his life and, when he was WWF champion in the mid-1990s, burned him out. His first thought in the

morning was about his evening match, and his last thought at night was spent on a critique of that match. Not so much anymore. Having experienced a short retirement, he knows what it's like to take days off and enjoy time with his wife and two young children, how important it is to separate his work and home lives and to start each day with a fresh outlook.

Michaels also doesn't have to be the most popular jock in school anymore. He knows that there are wrestlers better than him, more suited to winning titles and holding on to them because their bodies allow them to snap off moves a little quicker and recuperate from injuries a bit faster. He's okay with this, too, because all he

wants to be is the best wrestler he can be. Nothing more, nothing less.

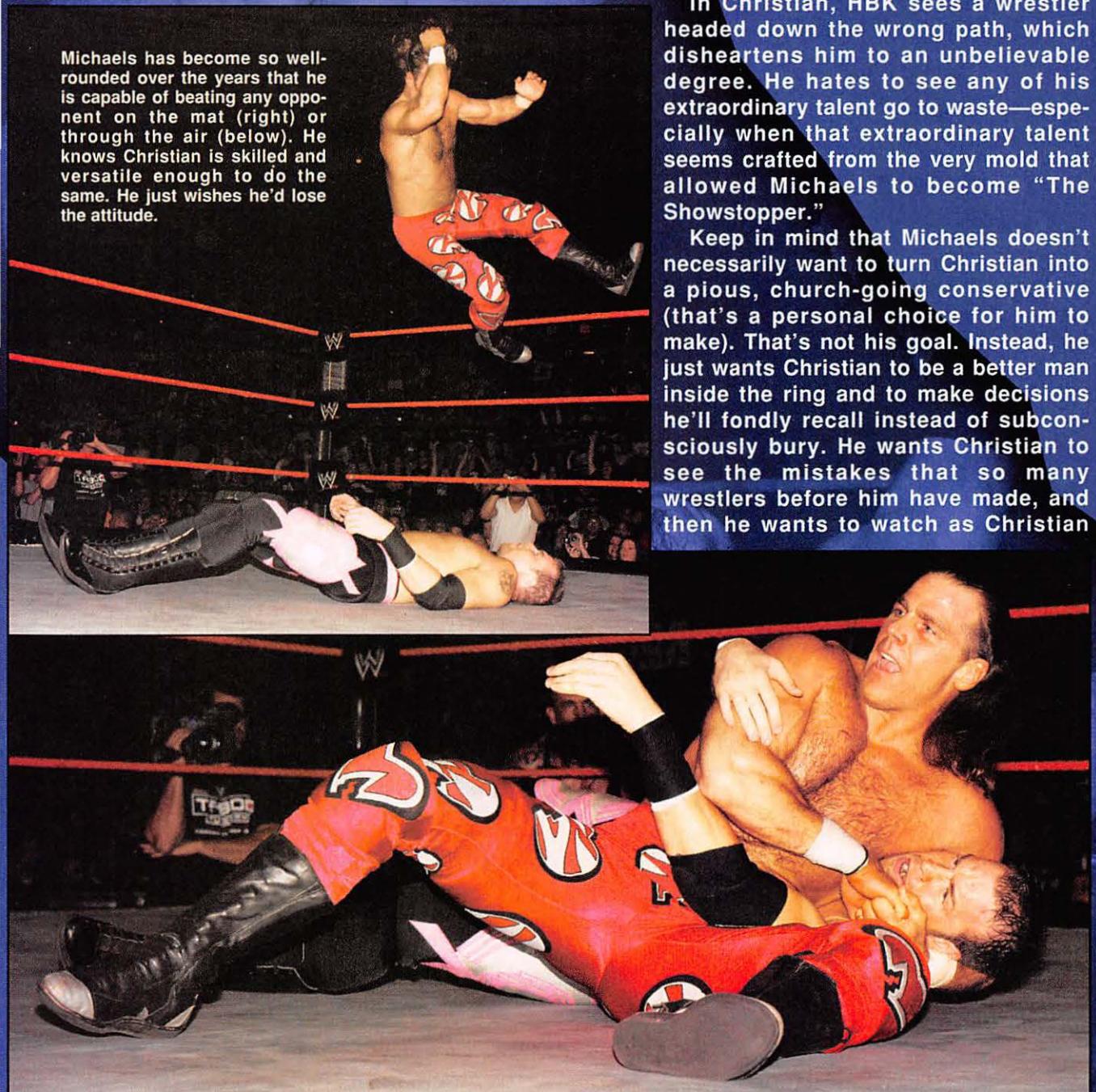
His comeback has been something of a revelation. He often wonders what his career would have been like had he become a born-again Christian earlier in his life. Would he still have won all those WWF World championships? Maybe he would have won twice as many. Probably, he thinks. Would *HBK* have ever been born? Would he have become one of the all-time greats?

Would he have been happier, more content? That's the only question to which he knows the definitive answer: yes.

In Christian, *HBK* sees a wrestler headed down the wrong path, which disheartens him to an unbelievable degree. He hates to see any of his extraordinary talent go to waste—especially when that extraordinary talent seems crafted from the very mold that allowed Michaels to become "The Showstopper."

Keep in mind that Michaels doesn't necessarily want to turn Christian into a pious, church-going conservative (that's a personal choice for him to make). That's not his goal. Instead, he just wants Christian to be a better man inside the ring and to make decisions he'll fondly recall instead of subconsciously bury. He wants Christian to see the mistakes that so many wrestlers before him have made, and then he wants to watch as Christian

Michaels has become so well-rounded over the years that he is capable of beating any opponent on the mat (right) or through the air (below). He knows Christian is skilled and versatile enough to do the same. He just wishes he'd lose the attitude.



smartly sidesteps them.

In other words, HBK wants Christian to become a born-again wrestler.

"Christian is a very good wrestler," said Michaels. "I can make him better, though. I can make him great. If he'd listen to me and put aside the ego trip he's on, it would be much easier for him to just go out to the ring and wrestle. His mental outlook could change completely."

Right now, he's too concerned with his image to excel. If he forgot about trying to be the wrestler he thinks he wants to be and would simply embrace the wrestler he already is, I bet he'd find himself challenging for Triple-H's [Raw] championship."

Although Michaels would never admit it, he wants to play a similar role for Christian that

THE TRICK BEHIND THE SUPERKICK

The superkick will be forever linked to Shawn Michaels. It's been his signature move for so long that the two have become somewhat synonymous. Need us to prove our point? Okay, quick, think of another wrestler who uses it (or has used it) as effectively. Take 10 seconds. Now take five more. When we took that much time, you know what answer we came up with? Absolutely no one. Zip. After an additional 10 seconds, Lance Storm came to mind, but he used more of a savate kick, and he never used it as prevalently as his finisher.

What does this mean? Nothing other than HBK is the maneuver's master. He performs the move more gracefully and with more power than any other wrestler in the history of the sport. Only a fortunate few wrestlers have kicked out of a pinfall attempt following its successful execution.

But what makes the move so special? What makes Michaels' execution of it so much better than anyone else's?

It's all in the stomp.

Over the years, we've seen Michaels nail the superkick hundreds of times. About 90 percent of the time, he sets up the maneuver by stomping his boot into the mat for about 15 to 20 seconds as his opponent recovers with his back turned

in a corner. It's loud, it's distracting, and it gets the fans up and out of their seats. As soon as Michaels' opponent turns around, HBK takes a quick sidestep and then launches his foot directly into his opponent's chin or chest. Usually, what follows next is the one ... two ... three.

It's often been wondered why

Michaels performs this ritual—especially considering that it should act as a warning beacon to his opponent, even though it rarely does. In previous years, some wrestlers have wondered if the stomp is the way HBK loaded his boot, perhaps by dropping some kind of lead weight from the top of the boot into the heel in order to give the maneuver a little more *oomph*—kind of like brass knuckles for the feet. That argument has since been discredited.

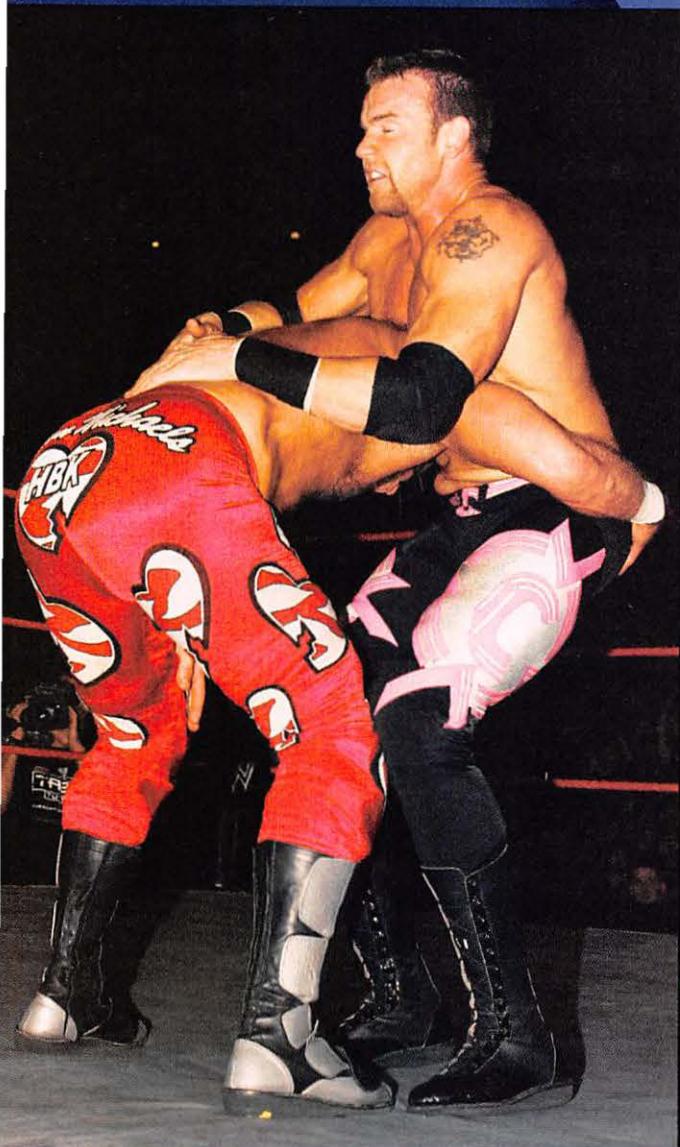
So, then, what is the stomp? "Just my way of letting my opponent know that the match is about to be over—and that there's not much that can be done about it," Michaels offered. "A little psychological warfare, I guess." It's one of the last remnants of HBK's late-1990s attitude. But it's more than that, too. It's strategic. When Michaels starts the stomp, his opponent is dazed and doesn't have him within his field of vision—which means that as he hears the stomp, he's put on the defensive. He doesn't know if he should turn, which way he should turn, or if he'll even be able to complete his turn before he's hit with sweet chin music. This makes him tentative—and slower—which gives HBK half a second longer to line up his opponent's head—and then take it off.

The stomp? It's really that simple.

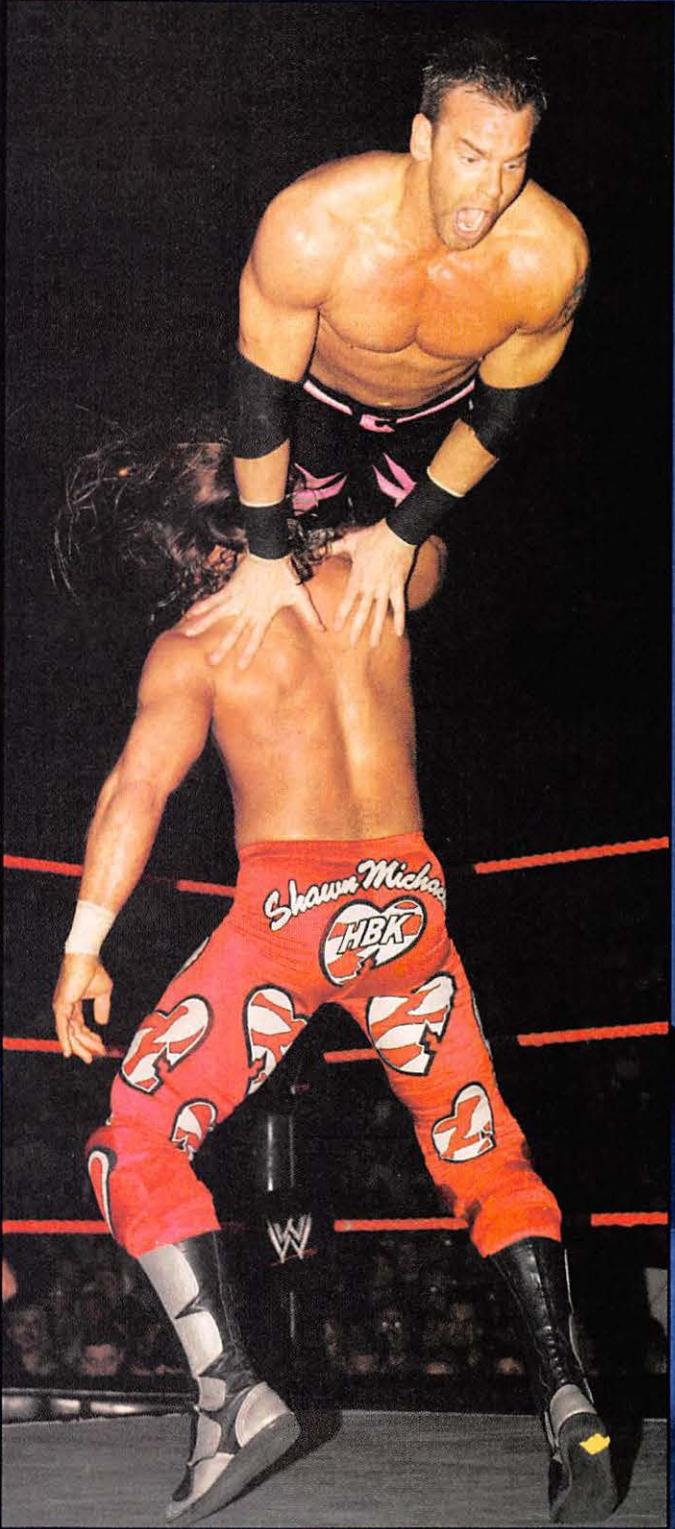
—Will Welsh



Time to start the stomp!



Christian was smart enough to spend some time scouting HBK before their match and nicely blocked a reverse atomic drop (left). He couldn't dodge a back bodydrop, however (below). If he takes an even more serious approach next time, maybe he'll beat Michaels.



Bret Hart played for him. When Michaels and Hart collided, Michaels was the young, brash upstart and Hart was the older, more experienced, and more grounded veteran. Hart's serious, workmanlike approach to the sport was different than any other approach Michaels had ever seen, and while Michaels didn't agree with it, he at least respected it.

As we all know, though, Michaels never really became the wrestler that Hart hoped he'd become. He was too immature to adopt such a serious side. Instead, he bullied his would-be mentor, helping to make Hart's last few years in the WWF miserable.

Now, Michaels is slowly attempting to become Christian's mentor of sorts—and Christian isn't taking to it all that kindly. He doesn't want an older, wiser, and more experienced wrestler telling him what to do. He enjoys who he is and the reactions that he gets in the ring. Look for the sneer of satisfaction on his face after he does or says something heinous. He doesn't just hope

championships will come—he knows they will.

If HBK wants to impact the young Canadian, he had better do it soon. If it doesn't take effect within the next few months, who knows, Christian might start planning his very own Montreal. □



Styles may not be a great brawler, but he didn't let whatever anger Kash stirred up inside him consume him. He was in control of his emotions enough to methodically take down Kash.

Wrestlers have forever searched for ways to find advantages before entering the ring. Get inside an opponent's head prior to a contest and the battle is half-won. But not everyone is vulnerable to mind games. TNA's **Kid Kash** had to find that out the hard way

TRYING TO KASH

The "Kid" learns a harsh lesson

By James Guttman

WHEN PREPARING FOR a wrestling match, certain things are of the utmost importance. A competitor needs a plan that outlines the moves he expects to use, the counters he will execute if need be, and the finisher he will ultimately try to unleash to score a victory. However, while his own strategy plays a critical role in taking out a foe, he can improve his chances for success if he figures out how to alter his *opponent's* game plan, to throw that enemy off his normal routine. That way, rather than adapting to his adversary's style, he can wrestle the type of match that best suits his own skills.



So much for what seemed like a brilliant plan at one time. When A.J. Styles used his Styles Clash to win his best-of-three table match series against Kid Kash and effectively end their feud (left), Kash was left a thoroughly beaten man (above).

IN-ON A.J.'S FAME



Getting inside the competition's head can be the difference between glory and embarrassment.

Few know this better than Kid Kash. For years, he has struggled to prove that despite his size, he can stand up to some of the best athletes in the sport. Standing 5'9", Kash constantly searches for ways to throw opponents off their games and neutralize the physical shortcomings that present problems for him.

When it came time to challenge A.J. Styles, however, he knew he had to find something different. See, he and Styles are virtually the same size, so there was no height or weight disadvantage to be concerned about. The problem was, well, Styles is one of the world's elite wrestlers. At his best, he is very, very difficult to beat.

So Kash needed to do something that would not only throw A.J. off his plan, but force him to wrestle a different kind of match.

Enter Kash's big mouth.

The psychological warfare that Kid Kash used against the former NWA heavyweight and TNA X champion was not your typical pro wrestling trash talk. Instead of delivering a normal prematch promo, claiming to be better than Styles, Kash went a different route. He voiced his opinions outside the arena. Sitting down for an interview with Bbrowndvideo.com, the bad boy of TNA went off on a tirade this summer. He tore into the company he worked for, the decisions it makes, and the wrestlers it features in prominent roles, specifically A.J. Styles.

Kash questioned Styles' credibility as NWA champion and even went so far as to say that Jeff Jarrett looked like a "chump" after losing the title to him. When speaking of men like Rick Steamboat and Ric Flair, two former NWA champions that followed similar scientific match strategies as Styles, Kid Kash said that A.J. would never be able to fill their shoes. It was a stinging comment meant to infuriate Styles.

It worked. The interview drew Kash a brief suspen-



It felt good for Styles to lay some right hands into the head of Kash. It also must have given him some satisfaction knowing that he didn't let Kash's nasty comments get to him too much.



"The Phenomenal One" hasn't had much experience in table matches. Good thing for him he was able to adapt quickly. Kash didn't count on him being able to do so.



sion from TNA, but it worked. Styles took notice. Styles wasn't happy. Styles wanted Kash.

Knowing full well that "The Phenomenal One," as Styles is promoted in TNA, goes into each match with a specific technical game plan, Kid reasoned that anger and a thirst for revenge would get him to wrestle a little less rationally and a bit more emotionally. A.J. Styles isn't

a brawler. He doesn't become giddy over the thought of smashing opponents with chairs and trash cans. His goal is to win athletic contests and titles. By making the conflict so intensely personal, Kash wanted Styles to go into their inevitable feud with an altogether different strategy.



and say that no one cares about him, it doesn't mean much when you defeat him.

Make that if you defeat him.

After dropping a standard match to Styles on August 4, Kash got him to sign for a streetfight two weeks later. He lost that, too. Didn't fare well in a six-man match involving Styles a week later or a tag team streetfight one week after that. But he had one last chance, he figured, when a best-of-three table match series was signed for September 8. Win what would be considered the finale to their feud and those earlier losses might be forgotten.

One problem: Styles didn't get to where he is on physical ability alone. His ascension to the very top of the TNA ladder came in part because he doesn't fall for head games like the type that Kash was playing.

So on that final Wednesday TNA pay-per-view, Kid Kash suited up and stepped into the ring to face Styles in that table match series. And even if it wasn't the type of scientific showcase in which Styles thrives, he was prepared. To Kash's surprise, Styles never let the agitation over his comments

As a student of the game, Kid knew that coercing a technical stalwart to wrestle an unusually violent match could suit his own needs perfectly. For Styles, who would rather score a beautiful pinfall than draw blood, a hardcore contest would lure him out of his comfort zone. It would be the perfect way for Kash to get Styles to make a major mistake.

Not only that, but Kash is fully aware of the old adage, "To be the man, you have to beat the man." While many fans already accept Styles as one of the industry's top stars, Kash reinforced that in a backhanded way with his comments. Although taking issue with Styles' prominent position, he made sure to mention that Styles was considered a top star. Why? Well, if you downgrade your opponent

get to him. Instead, he used it to fuel his fire. He anticipated a run-in by Kash's partner, Dallas, and it did more to hurt Kash's cause than Styles'. In spite of all that psychological warfare, Kash found himself under a broken table, courtesy of A.J.'s finishing maneuver, the Styles clash, when the final bell rang. Feud over. Plan thwarted.

Ironically, it might have been Kash's comments that precipitated his downfall. Rather than allowing them to change his strategy, A.J. Styles did what he has always done: focus on the task at hand. While this was a learning experience for Kash, his game plan wasn't necessarily a foolish one. It was an underhanded but gutsy attempt to undermine his opponent's strategy. There are ways to psych out every wrestler alive. For now, though, Kash has to be wondering if maybe Styles really does deserve all the accolades he has received the last two years. □

In spite of all that psychological warfare, Kash found himself under a broken table, courtesy of A.J.'s finishing maneuver, the Styles clash, when the final bell rang. Feud over. Plan thwarted.

RAY "BIG BOSSMAN" TRAYLOR (1962-2004)

**"He Was The
Nicest Bad Guy
I Ever Met"**

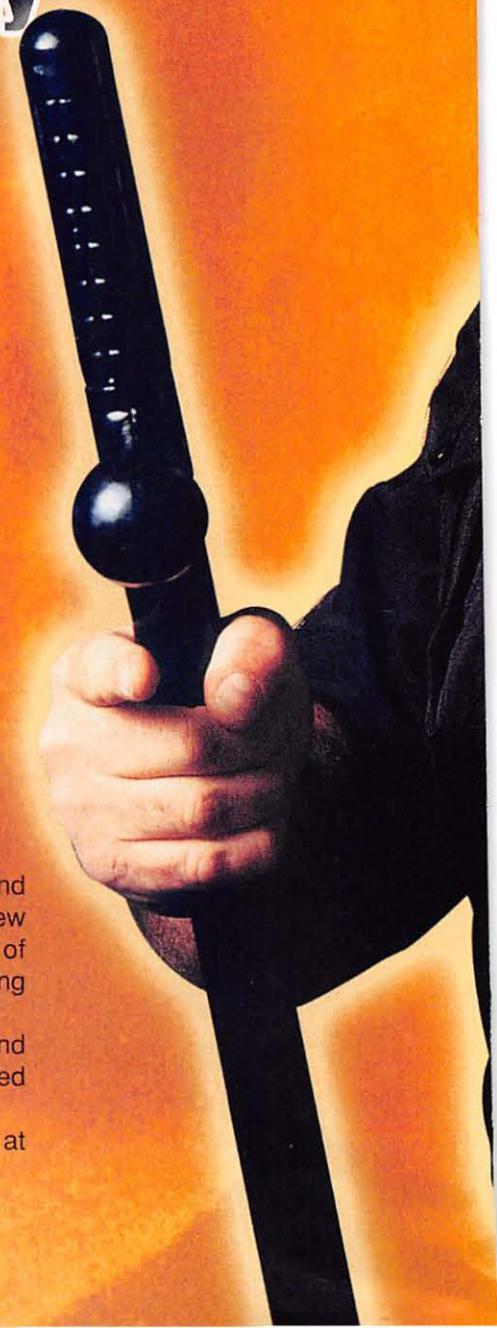
Although it was difficult not to laugh at the various names and personae Ray Traylor took on and some of the feuds in which he got involved during a very successful 18-year career, those who knew him best knew him as a wonderful, caring, funny man. His death this fall hit them very hard

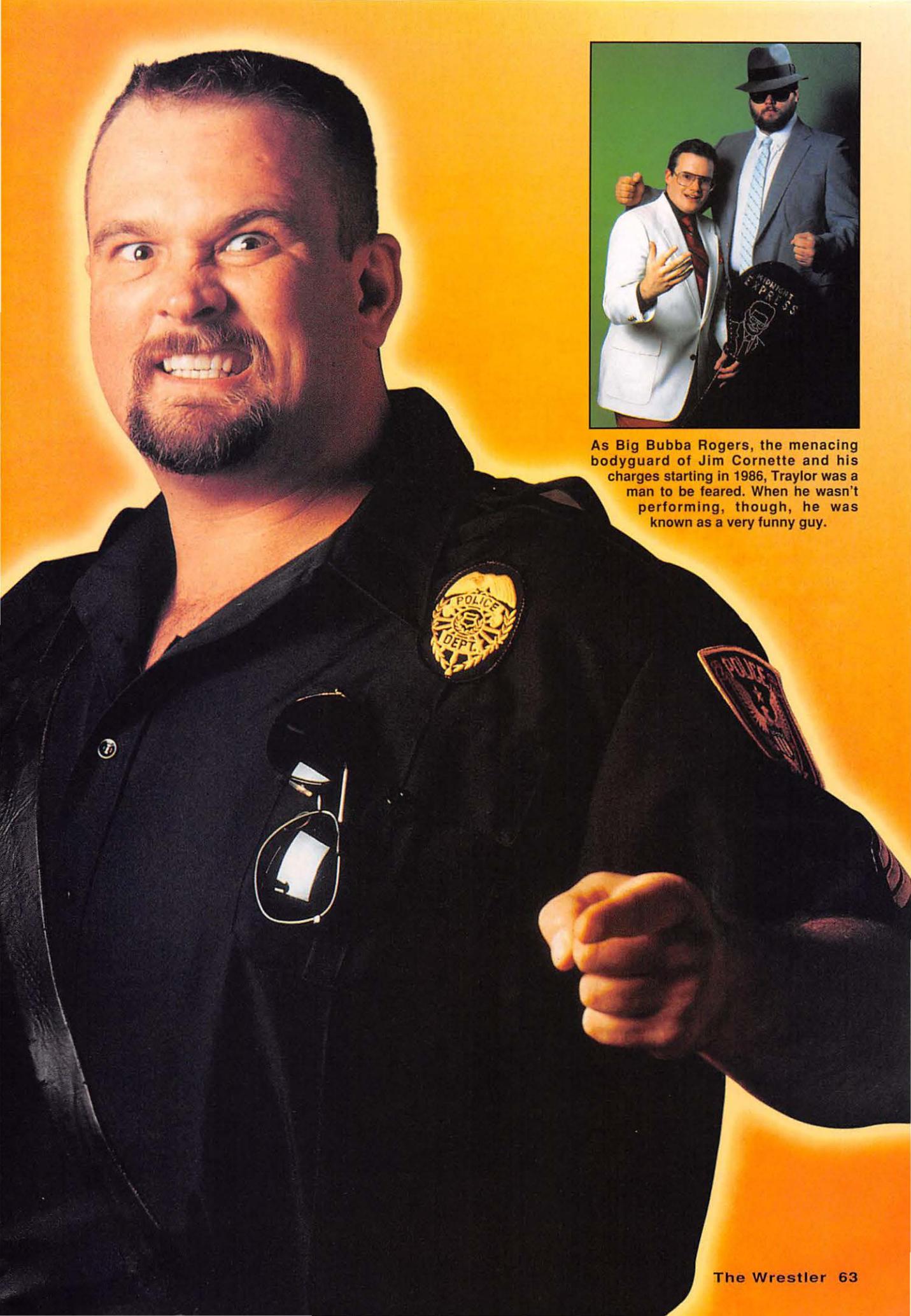
By Dan Murphy

AT ABOUT 9 p.m. on September 22, Angie Traylor found her husband asleep on their living room sofa. Ray Traylor had been busy the past few weeks, having organized a public memorial service for the victims of 9/11, and he was in the midst of filming a TV commercial for a local hunting business, so Angie could understand why he'd doze off on the couch.

But when she leaned over and kissed him, she realized he was cold and unresponsive to her touch. A short time later, Ray Traylor was pronounced dead at Wellstar Paulding Hospital in Dallas, Georgia.

Traylor—best known to wrestling fans as the Big Bossman—was dead at age 42.





As Big Bubba Rogers, the menacing bodyguard of Jim Cornette and his charges starting in 1986, Traylor was a man to be feared. When he wasn't performing, though, he was known as a very funny guy.

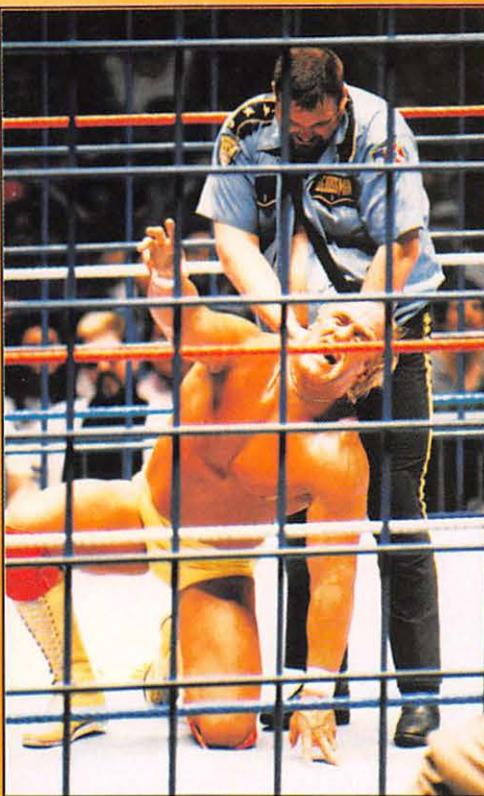
Traylor's death came as a shock to so many, as the former prison guard from Cobb County had not been complaining of any serious health problems and seemed to be feeling well at the time of his death. It is believed Traylor died as the result of a massive heart attack.

Several of Traylor's contemporaries remembered him as a good-hearted man who was quick with a joke, and a welcome part of any locker room.

"He was still a big kid who was fun to be around," Jim Cornette, who took on Traylor as his bodyguard when he debuted as Big Bubba Rogers in 1986, told the *Wrestling Observer*. "He'd drive you crazy, but he made me laugh sometimes until my face hurt."

"I always liked him," said Bret Hart, who worked alongside Traylor for several years in the WWF. "He was funny and always laughing a lot. He was fun to ride with and a good guy to have in the dressing room."

Traylor had been a wrestling fan all his life and had come from a long line of fans. His grandfather had once gotten so riled up as a fan that he whacked Freddie Blassie over the head with a



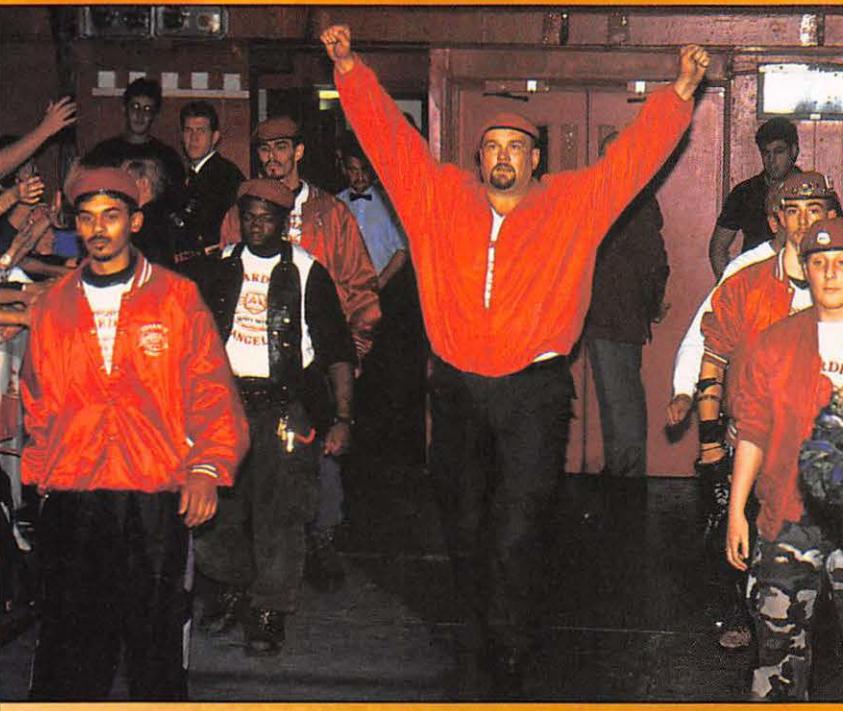
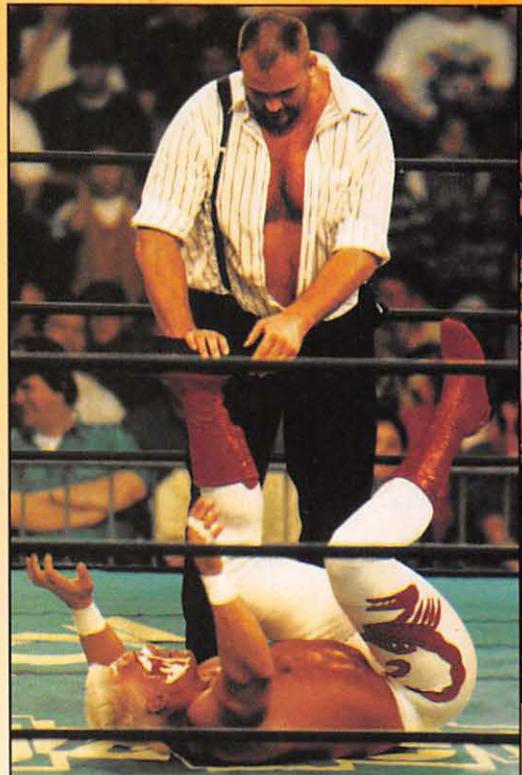
Big Bossman was reviled by "Hulkamaniacs" everywhere when he instigated a feud with Hulk Hogan soon after making his WWF debut. They battled all over the country, often inside a steel cage, but Bossman couldn't win Hogan's World title.

chair during a wrestling card in the 1950s. Traylor played high school football and really did work briefly as a prison guard before training for his career inside the ring in 1985.

In February 1986, Traylor, competing as a preliminary wrestler, was offered a televised match against Tully Blanchard. Dusty Rhodes was impressed by Traylor's performance, as Traylor weighed about 340 pounds but was quick on his feet and surprisingly agile. Rhodes pulled Traylor from TV, and he reappeared about three months later as Big Bubba Rogers, Cornette's stoic bodyguard.

As Big Bubba, Traylor immediately feuded with Rhodes, the most popular wrestler in the NWA. After the completion of that feud, Traylor was sent to the UWF, which had just been acquired by the NWA. On April 19, 1987, Traylor beat One Man Gang to win the UWF heavyweight title, which he eventually lost to "Dr. Death" Steve Williams.

In early-1988, Traylor joined the WWF, where he adopted the Big Bossman persona. He earned the hatred of the fans by beating preliminary opponents



Traylor became Big Bubba again in WCW and did surprisingly well in a feud with Sting in the mid-1990s (left). This was after a laughable stint as The Guardian Angel (above).

and then handcuffing them to the ropes and punishing them with his nightstick. Traylor jumped into a feud with Hulk Hogan over the World title and helped draw many a sellout crowd. The most memorable moment in the Bossman-Hogan feud came on NBC's *Saturday Night's Main Event* telecast in which Hogan superplexed Traylor off the top of a steel cage, which was a true testament to Traylor's athleticism and deep desire to entertain the fans. It was hardly the kind of move you'd expect to see two super heavyweights pull off in that era.

Following a nice run as a fan favorite, Traylor left the WWF in 1993 and competed in All-Japan Pro Wrestling, where he teamed with Williams in the company's annual tag team tournament.

In early-1994, Traylor signed with WCW and began feuding with Rick Rude and Vader as a fan favorite known as The Boss. Thanks in part to legal issues with the WWF, he briefly changed his name to The Guardian Angel—using the vigilante justice group's getup and all—before turning against Sting and going back to his Big Bubba persona. His in-ring identity crisis over, Traylor later competed under his given name and had a forgettable runs in a watered-down New World Order.

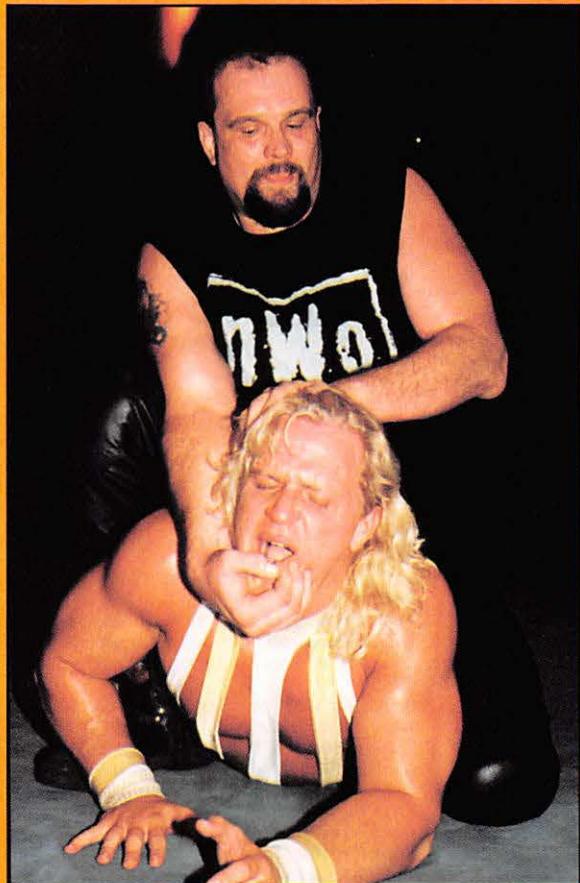
Traylor ultimately returned to the WWF as the trimmed down Big Bossman and served as Vince

McMahon's hired muscle in The Corporation. He won three hardcore championships, and he and Ken Shamrock briefly held the World tag team title. Bossman also feuded with The Big Show over the World title in late-1999. He was part some of the silliest storylines of the "Attitude" era, one in which he fed Pepper, the dog of an unsuspecting Al Snow, to Snow at a dinner and another in which he mocked Big Show's father's death and went so far as to crash the funeral and drag the casket around with his truck with Show desperately clinging to it.

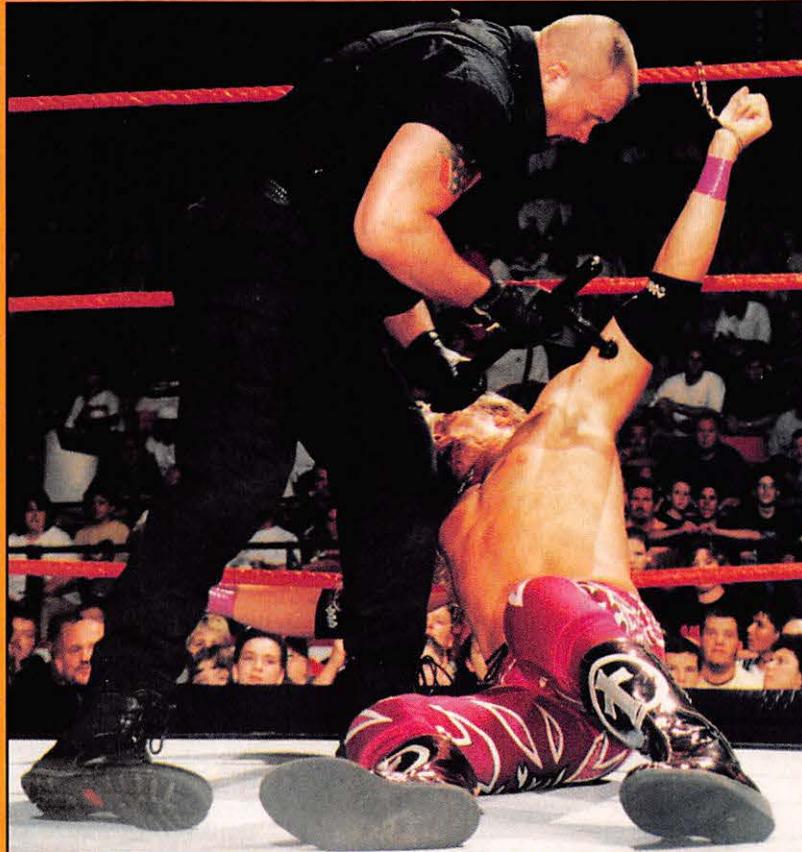
Traylor worked briefly as a trainer in OVW and reportedly had turned to religion following the death of his close friend Curt Hennig. He competed in several matches for the IWA in Japan and wrestled his final match on August 31 against Hacksaw Duggan.

"I don't know of anyone (else) who was on top from almost the day he started in the business," Cornette said.

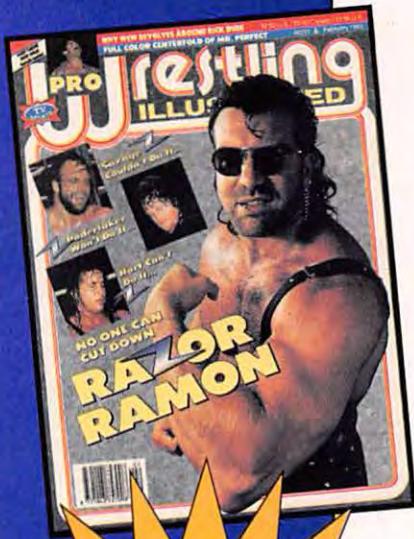
"Ray Traylor was always passionate about wrestling and always wanted to give the fans the most for their money," said INSIDE WRESTLING Contributing Writer Matt Brock. "He never let this business go to his head, and he always made time for his fans. In fact, even when he was wrestling as a bad guy, I'd say he was the nicest bad guy I ever met. Wrestling has lost a true class act." □



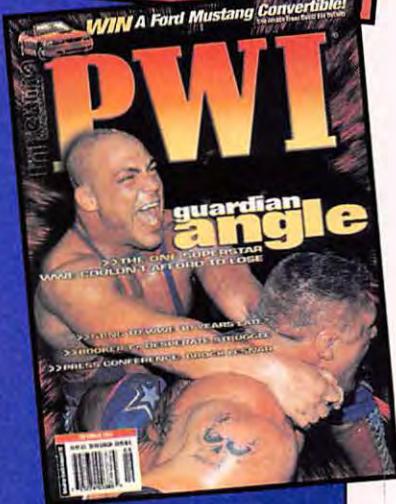
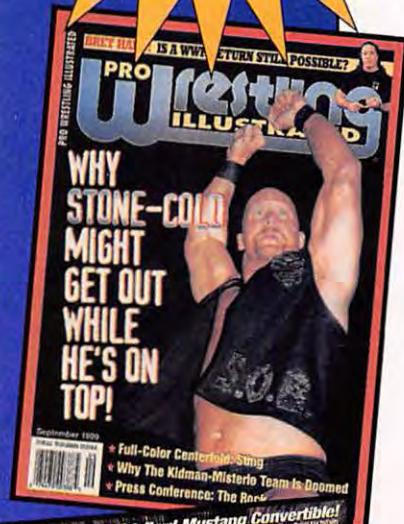
Ray Traylor became ... plain-old Ray Traylor in the ring when he joined the NWO. He was always a "B" teamer with that group, however.



Since he went back to the Big Bubba persona a second time, why not do the same with the Bossman gimmick? He looked like he was in terrific shape when he rejoined the WWF in the late-1990s. Here he takes his nightstick to Edge.



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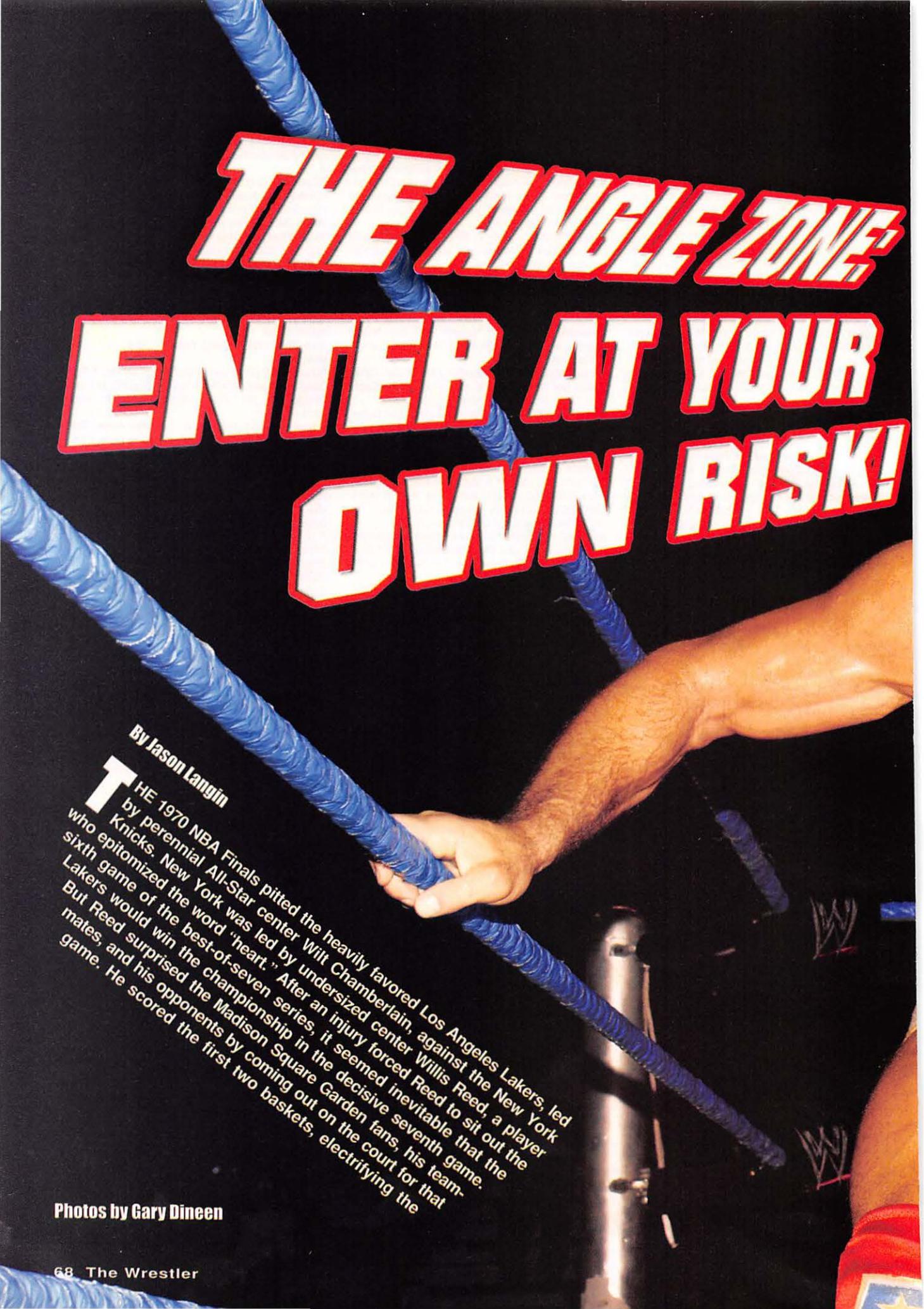
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THE ANGIE ZONE

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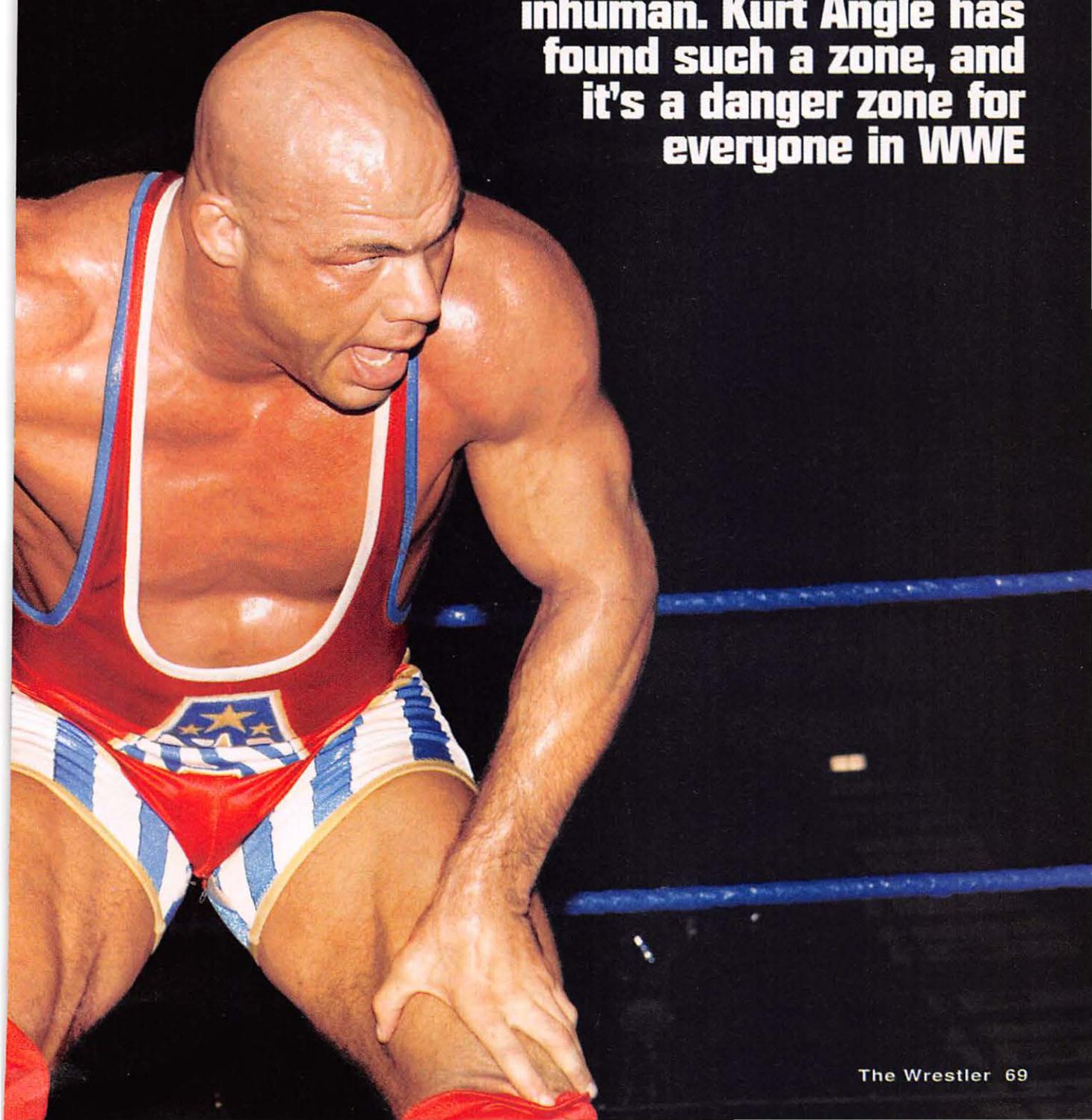


By Jason Langin

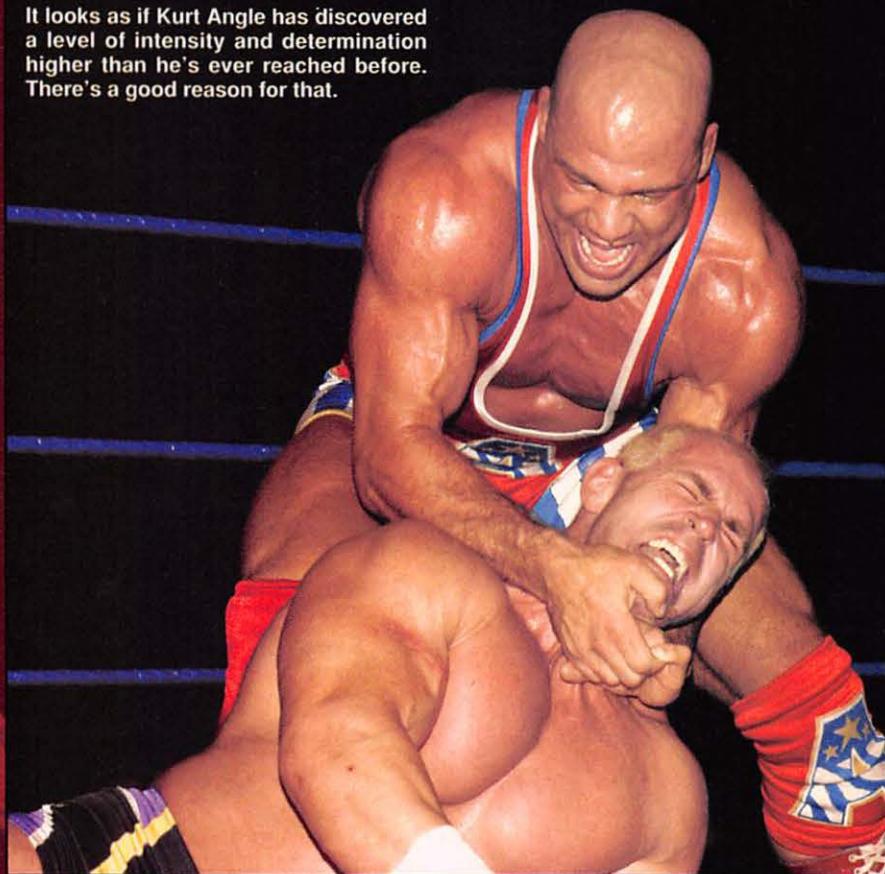
THE 1970 NBA Finals pitted the heavily favored Los Angeles Lakers, led by perennial All-Star center Wilt Chamberlain, against the New York Knicks. New York was led by undersized center Willis Reed, a player who epitomized the word "heart." After an injury forced Reed to sit out the sixth game of the best-of-seven series, it seemed inevitable seventh game. Lakers would win the championship in the decisive Garden fans, his teammates, and his opponents by coming out on the court for that game. He scored the first two baskets, electrifying the

Photos by Gary Dineen

You've heard about the "zone" that many superstar athletes enter when playing an important game, a zone in which their concentration and focus are at their height and their performance seems almost inhuman. Kurt Angle has found such a zone, and it's a danger zone for everyone in WWE



It looks as if Kurt Angle has discovered a level of intensity and determination higher than he's ever reached before. There's a good reason for that.



crowd and inspiring his team to win. Reed was hurt, but his determination made him an unstoppable force.

Move ahead 34 years to a WWE ring in 2004 and you will see a similar kind of determination in Kurt Angle. With serious neck injuries plaguing him the past few years, Angle realizes he has entered into a new phase of his wrestling career. A phase that could very well be his last.

Your Olympic hero is more than happy to remind you that he won a gold medal in 1996 with a broken

neck. That neck has been a major problem for Angle during his professional career as well, yet it has not stopped him from making a major impact on the sport since his 1999 debut.

Yes, it is amazing to think that Kurt Angle is still just a five-year veteran. Paging through *Pro Wrestling Illustrated's 2004 Wrestling Almanac*, you'll find a few other five-year veterans. Names include B-Boy, Bryan Wenzel, Adam Booker, Queenan Creed, and Rory Fox.

Who? Exactly.

In five years, Kurt Angle has held virtually every championship available to him in WWE. Go ahead and check that *Almanac* again. His is the kind of career that most wrestlers only dream of having. Angle has done it all in half a decade ... despite missing a significant amount of time due to injury.

But with success comes many problems. Angle has grown used to success and he hasn't had gold wrapped around his waist since September 16, 2003, the night he

lost the Smackdown championship in a thrilling "Iron-man" match to Brock Lesnar (*Pro Wrestling Illustrated's Match of the Year*). He had his chance to win that title back at WrestleMania XX, but Eddie Guerrero proved to be the better—or at least sneakier—man.

This is eating away at Angle's insides and has made him more determined than ever.

"He's more fired up than I've ever seen any other wrestler at any time, period," said Mark Jindrak, who recently aligned himself with Angle. "He's an inspira-

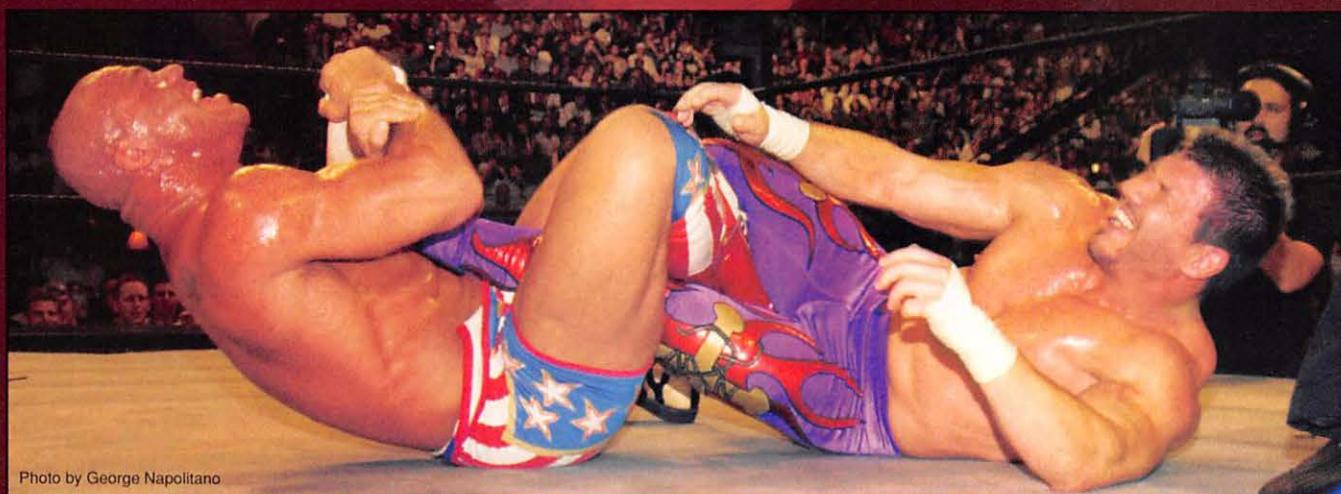


Photo by George Napolitano

Angle let his guard down just enough to allow Eddie Guerrero to beat him at WrestleMania XX. After dealing with more neck problems in the ensuing months, he came back and made sure the same didn't happen at SummerSlam. He figures he has no time to waste.

"When I see him before a match now, it's like watching a wild animal trying to get out of its pen. He paces, snarls, throws things around the locker room, shouts. Absolute caged fury. I wouldn't want to be the guy waiting for him in the ring. I'm not sure he ever lets himself get out of that special zone he gets in anymore." -Charlie Haas

tion to me. He has had so many problems with his neck, the kind of problems that would have forced other guys to retire. But Kurt isn't a regular guy; he's a wrestling machine."

A wrestling machine and a smart one at that. Knowing full well how difficult this comeback would be physically, Angle hired some muscle in the form of

Jindrak and Reigns. Both young competitors will certainly benefit from Angle's expertise and experience, and Angle will benefit from having a few big guys to watch his back.

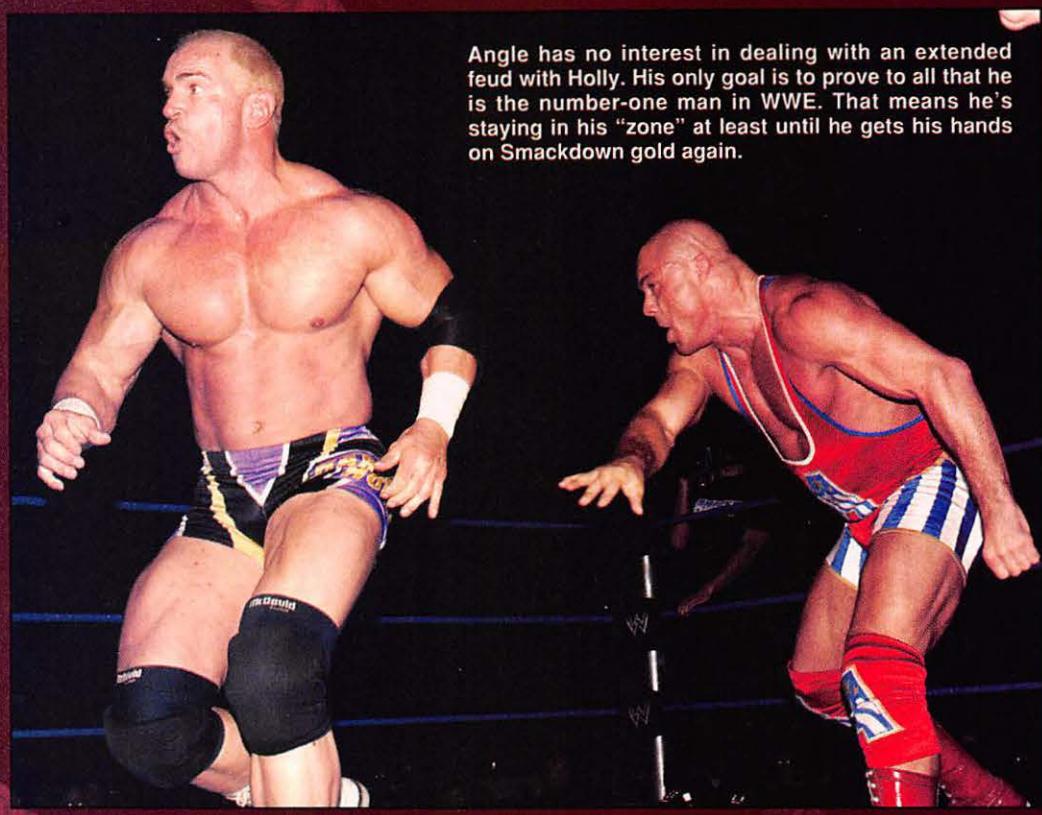
Angle found success the first time he aligned himself with others in the form of Team Angle members Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas. Haas, who still competes on Smackdown, had the following to say about his former mentor.

"I used to watch Kurt get ready for matches. He had this ritual where he would block out the rest of the world and get himself incredibly psyched up. It wasn't anything different than what most guys did before they went out to the ring. But now it's different. It's like he's in that kind of zone all the time. And he takes it to a whole new level before a match. When I see him before a match now, it's like watching a wild animal trying to get out of its pen. He paces, snarls, throws things around the locker room, shouts. Absolute caged fury. I wouldn't want to be the guy waiting for him in the ring. I'm not sure he ever lets himself get out of that special zone he gets in anymore."

Haas isn't the only superstar to notice the change in Angle. Others have stated that Angle is working like



There's no pro wrestler better on the mat than Angle. He's trying to drive that point home to Hardcore Holly (top left and above). In fact, he might be sending a message to every other WWE wrestler: Don't dare mess with me now!



Angle has no interest in dealing with an extended feud with Holly. His only goal is to prove to all that he is the number-one man in WWE. That means he's staying in his "zone" at least until he gets his hands on Smackdown gold again.

cally repaired neck has already taken plenty. A power bomb. A pile-driver. A German suplex. Any one of these moves could do serious damage and leave him no choice but to walk away from the sport he loves for good.

And that is why Angle is going full throttle all the time. He isn't setting long-term goals anymore. And no more games. He wants to accomplish everything he can and mow through every opponent he can now—or yesterday, if that were possible. That makes him a very dangerous opponent. Although Angle is currently focusing on The Big

this is his last chance to cement his legacy, that his focus and will to win are far greater than they've ever been. And, well, it could be his last shot. He might wrestle for five to 10 more years, but then he might only wrestle for five to 10 more months (or weeks). The neck can only take so much, and Angle's surgi-

Show, a man that once threw him off a balcony, he has made it clear to Smackdown General Manager Theodore Long that he wants a title shot and he wants one soon.

While heel vs. heel title matches have taken place in the past, it is unlikely that Long will sign a pay-per-

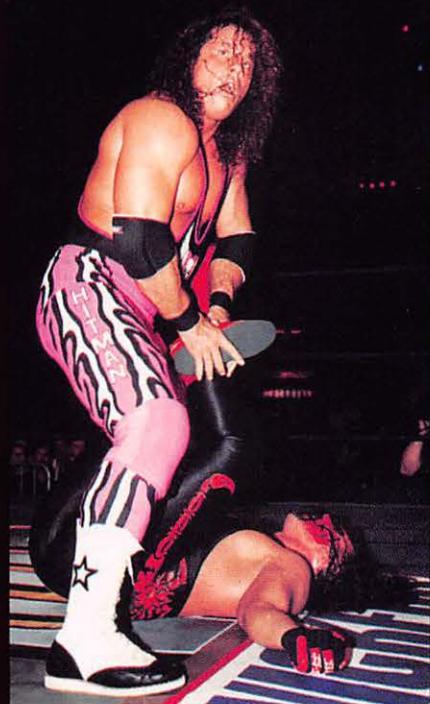
FIVE YEARS EARLIER: WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN FOR ANGLE ...

It's hard to imagine that Kurt Angle has only been wrestling (professionally that is) since 1999. And in his rookie year, Angle was already 30 years old, an age at which most superstar athletes are in their prime. Considering how much Angle has accomplished in such a short period, it makes you wonder what it would have been like had Angle begun his pro career, say, five years earlier. With which superstars would Angle have had a chance to do battle? Here are some possibilities:

Yokozuna. He was one of the sport's best big men of the early-1990s, with a big emphasis on the word "big." The 600-pound former WWF World champion

had some memorable encounters with many smaller opponents, Bret Hart being the most notable. A versatile competitor like Angle could have provided a real test for Yoko. Sadly, due to Yokozuna's death in 2000, this match will never take place.

Kevin Nash. Angle has always had good matches with The Undertaker, and Nash has a very similar build to "The Dead Man." With such an emphasis on power moves, Nash could have really given Angle a tough time. However, Nash's long legs would have been easy targets for Angle, who would have attempted amateur takedowns to set up his dreaded anklelock. This match could have



Could Bret have tied Angle in knots?



It isn't just his friends and allies with Smackdown who are saying they've never seen Angle so focused and driven all the time now. Even some who can't stand him are wary ... and impressed.

view main event between Angle and current champion John Bradshaw Layfield. Would fans buy into such an event? Because of this factor, Angle will probably need to play the waiting game.

And while he waits, no one who dares to stand in his way is safe. Angle will work to whittle down the competition in the WWE so that when he does get another shot at the championship, all serious contenders will be in a much weaker state. Having a posse like Jindrak and Reigns will allow him to do that.

happened during Nash's recent WWE stint, but because they were competing for different brands, it never came to be.

Bret Hart. Perhaps the most talked about match that never was (and never will be) is Angle against Bret Hart. Angle wanted the "Hitman" to come out of retirement to wrestle him last year, but Hart's health won't allow that. They have similar builds and are both tremendously skilled technical wrestlers. Plus, both men rely on devastating submission holds. A world title match between these two could have been the main event of any pay-per-view.

Dr. Isaac Yankem. No, wait. These two wrestled before, didn't they?

Mick Foley. Whether he was the deranged Mankind or the happy-go-lucky Mankind, Foley would

have been a fascinating opponent for Angle. Both men are so entertaining that a verbal feud alone could have been thrilling! A properly hyped showdown between the hardcore legend and the technical master would have been a great contrast in styles.

Shawn Michaels. The match that never was, but thanks to HBK's amazing comeback in 2002, is still a possibility. Many fans didn't think Michaels would hang around after his feud with arch-rival Triple-H, but the former champion has stayed near the top of the Raw roster for two years. While a match between Angle and Michaels five years ago would have been spectacular, a match between them now might be even better. A dream match at WrestleMania 21? It'd be nice ...

—Jason Langin

WWE executives are happy to have Angle back in the mix. The Smackdown brand is not as heavily laden with superstars as the Raw brand is. Since the brands were separated two years ago, Angle has been a steady force for the blue team when healthy. There is really no other spot for him other than at the top of the roster.

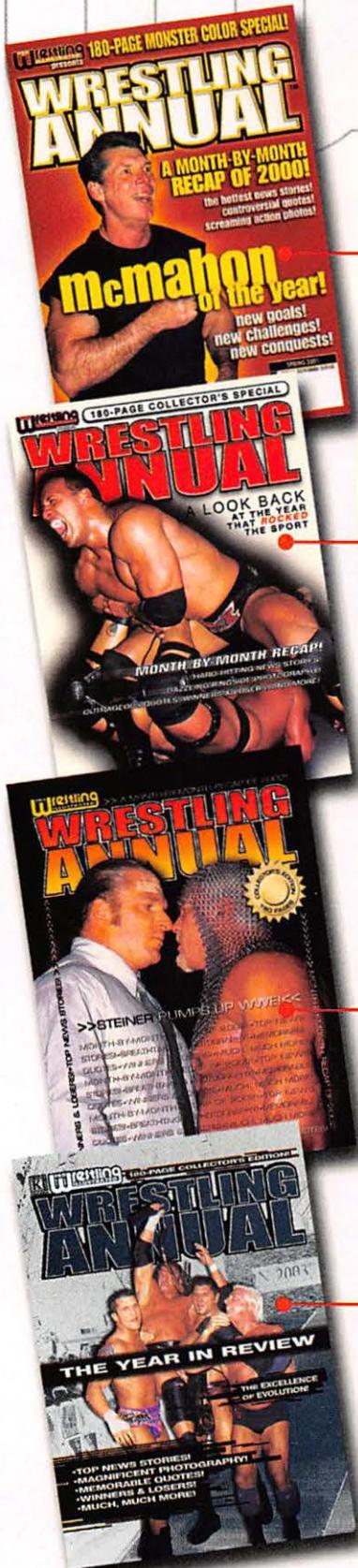
"What's Angle going to do, start a feud with Funaki?" joked Smackdown color analyst Tazz. "No, Angle is going back to the top. More matches with Guerrero, Undertaker, Cena, Van Dam, the top dogs. Kurt doesn't do anything small. He won an Olympic gold medal, you know."

Angle has mentioned in several interviews that he would like to stare down The Undertaker at WrestleMania 21. And while it would certainly be a nice accomplishment to end 'Taker's vaunted undefeated streak, it won't mean that much to him unless the Smackdown championship, the 15 pounds of gold that would show everyone that he is the best, is at stake.

Angle needs to be in the championship picture. It drives him, consumes him, even more so than it drives and consumes Triple-H on Raw and Jeff Jarrett in the NWA, which is saying a lot. Let all the other WWE competitors consider this their fair warning: Kurt Angle is in the zone. And he's not coming out. □

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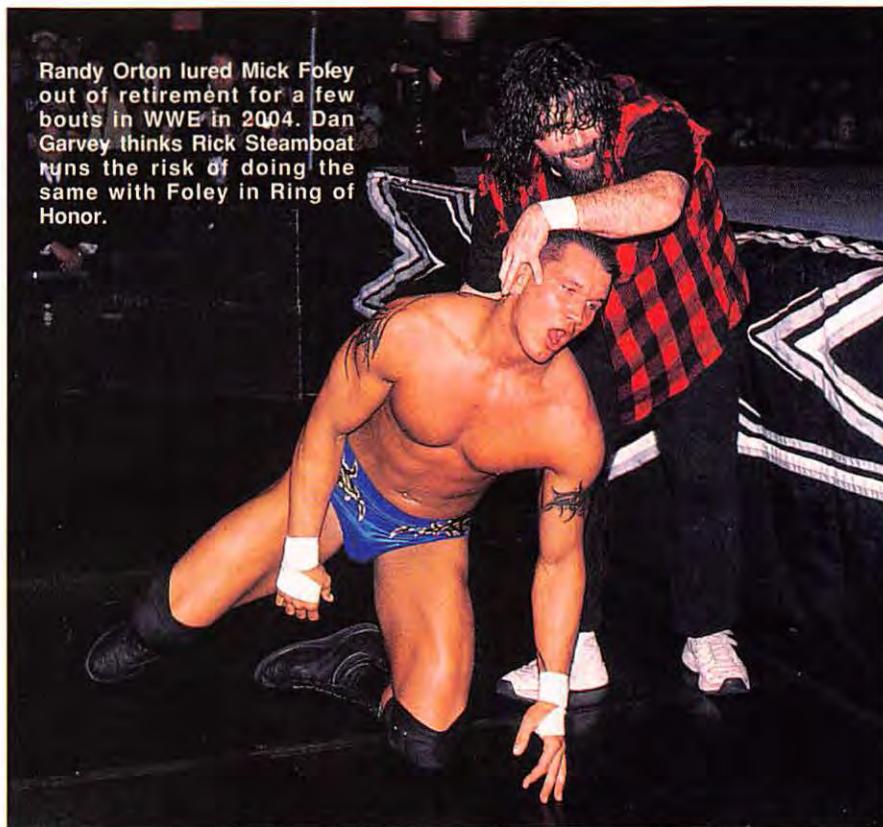
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YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 7)

Randy Orton lured Mick Foley out of retirement for a few bouts in WWE in 2004. Dan Garvey thinks Rick Steamboat runs the risk of doing the same with Foley in Ring of Honor.



Foley. Foley said he was impressed with ROH and called it the "Ring Of Hardcore." Steamboat took offense to that quote, as he wants ROH to be known for its "pure" wrestling. The one thing I've been wondering is whether Steamboat is really serious about this.

The days of seven-minute headlocks and armbars are over, Ricky. Wrestling fans want to see action and lots of it! When are you going to get that through your head? I think the DDT he took from Jake "The Snake" Roberts back in the '80s is still affecting "The Dragon's" thinking pattern.

I believe Mick Foley was trying to make a point about the work ethic in Ring of Honor. But if you get in Mick's face, Ricky, expect to be met with a sock down your throat.

Bang! Bang!

DAN GARVEY
Rome, GA

MORE INTERNATIONAL, PLEASE

I love your publication, but I would

really be interested in seeing some more coverage of wrestling outside the United States. I don't know a ton about wrestling in Japan and Mexico, but there were so many great international stars that used to compete in the NWA and WCW, and I always wonder what happened to them when WCW folded.

If you could find some space for it, I would love some more full-length feature articles on international stars that American fans might be familiar with, like Yuji Nagata, Masa Chono, Ken-suke Sasaki, Keiji Muto, Masato Tanaka, Shinjiro Ohtani, Hector Garza, Latin Lover, Heavy Metal, and others.

Thanks—and keep up the good work.

STAN DORINI
Monaca, PA

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Pro Wrestling Illustrated recently celebrated its 25th year as the sport's number-one publication in a very special way. Those who subscribe to PWI or spotted it at the newsstand in time got a treat. Not only did PWI produce a silver anniversary special, but as an added bonus, we polybagged a re-print of our very first issue, from 1979!

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 9)



It appears Vince Russo will be gone from TNA (and perhaps all of wrestling) once his feud with Dusty Rhodes is over. Remember, however, that not everything is as it appears where Russo is concerned.

"I will make the most of my situation and shut this oversized rodeo clown's mouth up for him," Booker said.

Carlito Caribbean Cool—son of legendary Puerto Rican wrestler **Carlos Colon**—made the most of his first televised WWE match by kayingoing **John Cena** with a chain to win the U.S. title. These days, Colon is telling everyone who'll listen just how cool he is.

"I said I would win this title, and that's what I did. I don't see why people are so angry at me," Triple-C said. "I suppose jealousy is the price you pay for being this cool."

Smackdown General Manager **Teddy Long** has accused Colon of being involved in the bar fight that put Cena out of action following the match. I'm sure more information will be forthcoming.

While Patterson's retirement has been making headlines, another prominent wrestling personality is also considering riding off into the sunset. **Vince Russo**, who has served as TNA's director of authority and as part of the promotion's

creative team, told confidantes he was considering leaving wrestling after the big Victory Road pay-per-view. According to locker room sources, Russo is frustrated by the direction of the company and has grown tired of arguing with **Jeff Jarrett** and **Dutch Mantel** over how the promotion should be run. Russo was in the midst of an on-air feud with **Dusty Rhodes** at press time and has indicated he plans to leave the company as soon as that runs its course.

However, it should be noted that Russo has threatened to leave the company several times before. This could be yet another power play by the master of the swerve.

Speaking of Victory Road, TNA was pinning its hopes for future success on the performance of the company's first monthly pay-per-view. The promotion hopes bringing in such names as **Scott Hall**, **Kevin Nash**, and **Roddy Piper** will draw more interest in the product. We'll soon see if **The Outsiders** and Piper will be a blessing or a curse to TNA.

In one other bit of TNA news, **Andy Douglas** (of **The Naturals**) and **Johnny Devine** (of **Team Canada**) were injured in a barroom fight in Nashville, with both receiving stab wounds. It appears Devine will miss several months of action, but Douglas should be back in top form by the time you read this.

Attention bail bondsmen: Former **Gangsta** and hardcore legend **New Jack** was arrested and charged with aggravated battery with a deadly weapon for his hardcore actions in a match in Jacksonville, Florida. According to the police report, New Jack stabbed his opponent, **William Jason Lane**, 14 times and was held on \$40,000 bond even though his actions were part of a hardcore match in Thunder Wrestling Federation. Lane told

police he wasn't sure what happened but that "this is a dangerous sport."

TWF promoter **Maurice Williams** insisted his promotion doesn't do hardcore and that wrestlers will be checked closely before matches in the future. At least one witness, however, said it appeared one of the wrestlers lost control when he thought the other was "intentionally trying to hurt him," according to the Associated Press.

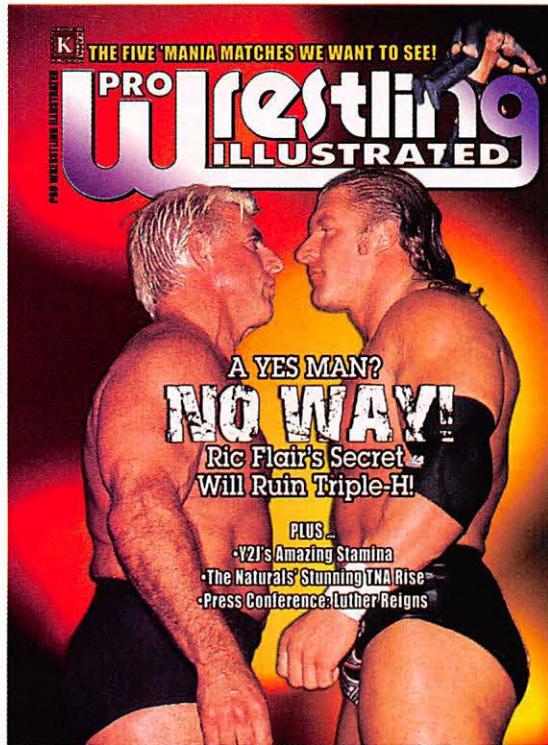
To help raise the bail money, New Jack put out a notice on his Web site asking fans to donate directly to his bail fund or by bidding on a personalized phone call from jail from New Jack. One question: How can New Jack make a personalized phone call? Isn't he only allowed one call in jail—and hasn't he used it already?

That's what's happening. Catch ya again next issue. □



How's this for a bizarre story? New Jack (shown here against Axl Rotten) was arrested and charged with aggravated battery with a deadly weapon for allegedly getting a bit too hardcore during a match in Florida.

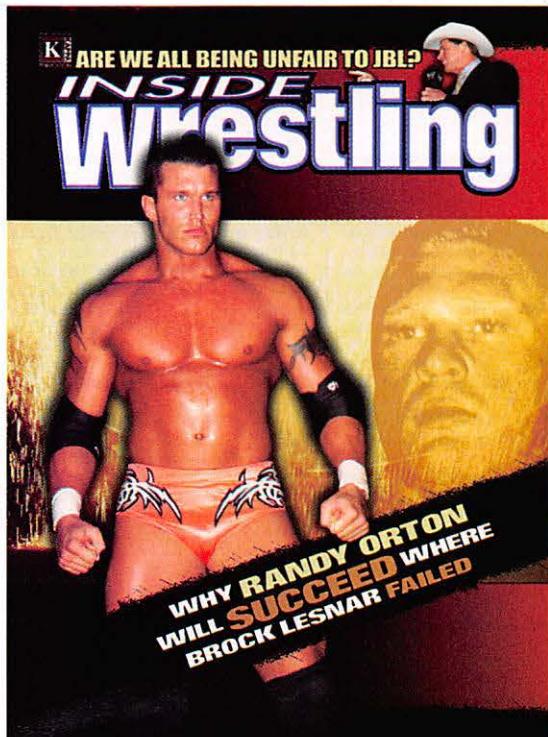
this month in...



Is **RIC FLAIR** keeping secrets? We think he is. We think he's keeping a big, juicy one from **TRIPLE-H**. And when "The Game" finds out, he won't like it at all. Maybe what **RANDY ORTON** said about Flair rang truer than anyone ever knew ... It's not too early to start thinking about WrestleMania 21, and we're here to offer you the five matches we want to see. If we had our way, we'd see an inter-brand dream showdown, the return of **BROCK LESNAR**, two ex-**EVOLUTION** teammates slugging it out, and more! ... Don't miss our in-depth look at the amazing mental toughness of **CHRIS JERICHO**!

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Dec. 1983: The Night The AWA World Title Was Stolen From Mil Mascaras. Also: Roddy Piper, Larry Zbysko.

Dino Bravo, Fabulous Ones, Garvin & Sunshine.

March 1984: Is Tito Santana Trying To Blackmail The WWF? Also: Wayne & Sawyer, Hogan-Race, David Von Erich, Jesse Ventura.

July 1984: Tommy Rich Is Back! And He Owes It All To The Fans. Also: Valiant-Rhodes, Ric Flair, Mike Von Erich, Billy Jack.

Aug. 1984: Garvin vs. Roberts: "Hands Of Stone" Crushes "The Snake." Also: Freebirds-Destruction Inc., Sawyer-Sullivan, Lawler & Dillon, McDaniels-Race.

Nov. 1984: The \$50,000 Full-Nelson Challenge Match: Billy Jack Gets Bloody Revenge Against Superstar Graham. Also: Roddy Piper, Heenan & Saito, Brody & Hansen, Kerry Von Erich.

Dec. 1984: The Tully Blanchard-Rick Steamboat Feud: Will Dusty Rhodes End It ... Or Make It Worse? Also: Tito Santana, Martel-Atlas, D. Funk, Mike Von Erich, Williams-Taylor.

Jan. 1985: Kerry Von Erich: "I've Got Ric Flair's NWA Title Within My Grasp." Also: Albano & Laufer, Koloffs & Kermode, Road Warriors, Lawler & Rude, Scott McGhee.

Feb. 1985: Greg Valentine Wins Tito Santana's Intercontinental Title ... But Does He Deserve To Be Champion? Also: Ronnie Garvin, Warriors-Shepherds, Flair-Billy Jack, Nikita Koloff.

April 1985: Six-Man Riot! Road Warriors & Ellering vs. Rhodes, Rich, & Anderson. Also: Tonga Kid, tomorrow's stars, Adams-Kevin, Flair-Jack, Terminators.

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The Wrestler

TOP 10

- 1 TRIPLE-H**
269, Greenwich, CT
(6) WWE Raw champion
- 2 JOHN B. LAYFIELD**
306, Roscoe, TX
(3) WWE Smackdown champion
- 3 KENTA KOBASHI**
282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
(2) GHC heavyweight champion
- 4 RANDY ORTON**
265, St. Louis, MO
(1) No. 1 contender: WWE Raw title
- 5 TOSHIAKI KAWADA**
245, Ashikaga, Japan
(5) All-Japan Triple Crown champion
- 6 BOOKER T**
250, Houston, TX
(10) No. 1 contender: WWE Smackdown title
- 7 JEFF JARRETT**
230, Nashville, TN
(8) NWA heavyweight champion
- 8 SHELTON BENJAMIN**
245, Spartanburg, SC
(-) WWE Intercontinental champion
- 9 THE UNDERTAKER**
304, Dallas, TX
(7) No. 2 contender: WWE Smackdown title
- 10 EDGE**
240, Toronto, Ontario
(9) No. 3 contender: WWE Raw title



The Undertaker

TAG TEAMS

- 1 RENE DUPREE & KENZO SUZUKI**
Combined weight: 516 pounds
(-) WWE Smackdown tag team champions
- 2 MINORU SUZUKI & YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA**
Combined weight: 514 pounds
(3) IWGP International tag team champions
- 3 CHRIS BENOIT & EDGE**
Combined weight: 464 pounds
(-) WWE Raw tag team champions
- 4 ROBERT CONWAY & SYLVAN GRENIER**
Combined weight: 475 pounds
(1) No. 1 contenders: WWE Raw tag title
- 5 MITSUHARU MISAWA & YOSHINARI OGAWA**
Combined weight: 430 pounds
(5) GHC tag team champions
- 6 REY MISTERIO JR. & ROB VAN DAM**
Combined weight: 400 pounds
(-) No. 1 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title
- 7 BOBBY RUDE & ERIC YOUNG**
Combined weight: 450 pounds
(-) NWA tag team champions
- 8 KENDO KA SHIN & YUJI NAGATA**
Combined weight: 423 pounds
(8) All-Japan International tag team champions
- 9 WILLIAM REGAL & EUGENE**
Combined weight: 474 pounds
(-) No. 2 contenders: WWE Raw tag title
- 10 BUH BUH RAY & D-VON DUDLEY**
Combined weight: 579 pounds
(4) No. 2 contenders: WWE Smackdown tag title

WWE RAW

Raw Champion:

- TRIPLE-H**
(2) 269, Greenwich, CT
- 1-RANDY ORTON**
(C) 265, St. Louis, MO
- 2-SHELTON BENJAMIN**
(-) 245, Minneapolis, MN
- 3-EDGE**
(3) 240, Toronto, Ontario
- 4-CHRIS JERICHO**
(4) 225, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- 5-CHRIS BENOIT**
(1) 224, Edmonton, Alberta
- 6-GENE SNITSKY**
(-) 307, Nesquehoning, PA
- 7-CHRISTIAN**
(-) 225, Toronto, Ontario
- 8-BATISTA**
(7) 318, Washington, DC
- 9-RIC FLAIR**
(-) 243, Charlotte, NC
- 10-MAVEN**
(9) 210, Chantilly, VA

WWE SMACKDOWN

Smackdown Champion:

- JOHN B. LAYFIELD**
(C) 306, Roscoe, TX
- 1-BOOKER T**
(2) 250, Houston, TX
- 2-THE UNDERTAKER**
(1) 304, Dallas, TX
- 3-CARLITO CARIBBEAN COOL**
(-) 220, San Juan, Puerto Rico
- 4-THE BIG SHOW**
(-) 485, Aiken, SC
- 5-KURT ANGLE**
(4) 233, Pittsburgh, PA
- 6-EDDIE GUERRERO**
(5) 223, El Paso, TX
- 7-SPIKE DUDLEY**
(6) 155, Providence, RI
- 8-REY MISTERIO JR.**
(8) 163, San Diego, CA
- 9-BILLY KIDMAN**
(-) 195, Allentown, PA
- 10-CHAVO GUERRERO JR.**
(-) 185, El Paso, TX

OVW

OVW Champion:

- CHRIS CAGE**
(-) 220, Youngstown, OH
- 1-MATT MORGAN**
(C) 330, Fairfield, CT
- 2-JOHNNY JETER**
(2) 218, San Diego, CA
- 3-JOHNNY NITRO**
(3) 204, Los Angeles, CA
- 4-MATT CAPPOTELLI**
(-) 220, Norwich, NY
- 5-KEN DOANE**
(-) 210, Louisville, KY
- 6-BRENT ALBRIGHT**
(4) 230, Tulsa, OK
- 7-JOEY MATTHEWS**
(5) 213, Fayetteville, NC
- 8-SEVEN**
(10) 278, Memphis, TN
- 9-SETH SKYFIRE**
(8) 224, Louisville, KY
- 10-AARON STEVENS**
(6) 237, Boston, MA

RING OF HONOR

ROH Champion:

- SAMOA JOE**
(C) 270, American Samoa
- 1-JOHN WALTERS**
(6) 220, Boston, MA
- 2-C.M. PUNK**
(3) 220, Chicago, IL
- 3-BRYAN DANIELSON**
(5) 185, Aberdeen, WA
- 4-AUSTIN ARIES**
(4) 202, Milwaukee, WI
- 5-HOMICIDE**
(2) 220, Brooklyn, NY
- 6-ALEX SHELLEY**
(-) 199, Detroit, MI
- 7-LOW-KI**
(8) 170, Brooklyn, NY
- 8-NIGEL MCGUINNESS**
(-) 220, London, England
- 9-STEVE CORINO**
(-) 230, Sea Isle City, NJ
- 10-ACE STEEL**
(-) 210, Malibu, CA

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue. Note: In an effort to keep the ratings as up-to-date as possible, these pages are often the last to be sent to the printer. Thus, the ratings may reflect changes not reflected in the remainder or the issue.

For period ended October 28, 2004

AWA SUPREME CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Brad Lamen; 1—Erik Draven; 2—Ricky Ruckus; 3—Mason the Mangler; 4—Billy Maverick; 5—Prophit; 6—Tella Ozeato; 7—Todd Morton; 8—Spazz; 9—Bobo Brazil Jr.; 10—Damien Divine.

BAD 2 THE BONE WRESTLING: Champion—Billy Black; 1—Vic the Bruiser; 2—Mason the Mangler; 3—J.C. Bailey; 4—K-Lo; 5—Simon Sezz; 6—Billy Maverick; 7—Mike Samples; 8—Randy Royal; 9—Steve Marino; 10—Guido Andretti.

BORDER CITY WRESTLING: Champion—D-Lo Brown; 1—Shane Douglas; 2—Chris Sabin; 3—Alex Shelley; 4—Miyamoto; 5—Petey Williams; 6—A-1; 7—Tornado; 8—Dyson Pryce; 9—Christopher Daniels; 10—Joe E. Legend.

CHAMPIONSHIP PRO WRESTLING: Champion—Zubov; 1—Glen Osbourne; 2—Shane Shadows; 3—Bob Keller; 4—Switchblade; 5—Hyrox; 6—Leslie Leatherman; 7—Johnny Graham; 8—Cody McGraw; 9—The Safari Hunter; 10—Mercury Flash.

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION: Champion—John Walters; 1—Fred Sampson; 2—Austin Aries; 3—Mike Kruel; 4—Andrew Ryker; 5—Mr. Ooh La La; 6—Johnny Maxx; 7—Mozart Fontaine; 8—Prince Nana; 9—Shawn Patrick; 10—Aden Chambers.

MIDWEST POWERHOUSE WRESTLING: Champion—Chico Es Loco; 1—Curtis Payne; 2—Scar; 3—Damian Blade; 4—The Searcher; 5—Christian Haze; 6—Xavier Frost; 7—Rick Ruby; 8—The Stud; 9—Wapochoncho; 10—The Great Takoshi.

NWA
NWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN

1—JEFF HARDY
(2) 212, Cameron, NC
2—MONTY BROWN
(1) 268, Detroit, MI
3—RAVEN
(7) 243, Short Hills, NJ
4—A.J. STYLES
(3) 202, Gainesville, GA
5—ABYSS
(10) 295, Cincinnati, OH
6—RICKY MURDOCH
(5) 261, Houston, TX
7—PETEY WILLIAMS
(9) 180, Windsor, Ontario
8—J.T. WOLFEN
(6) 297, New Haven, CT
9—JERRELLE CLARK
(-) 190, Orlando, FL
10—KERRY BROWN
(-) 290, Kansas City, MO

TNA
NWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN
1—PETEY WILLIAMS
(1) 180, Windsor, Ontario
2—JEFF HARDY
(2) 212, Cameron, NC
3—A.J. STYLES
(4) 202, Gainesville, GA
4—MONTY BROWN
(3) 268, Detroit, MI
5—RAVEN
(10) 243, Short Hills, NJ
6—ABYSS
(-) 295, Cincinnati, OH
7—RON KILLINGS
(5) 230, Charlotte, NC
8—CHRIS SABIN
(6) 207, Hell, MI
9—ALEX SHELLEY
(8) 199, Detroit, MI
10—MICHAEL SHANE
(-) 221, San Antonio, TX

NATIONAL WRESTLING LEAGUE: Champion—Samu; 1—John Rambo; 2—Raven; 3—Gutterboy; 4—The Patriot; 5—Dink the Clown; 6—Chad Bowman; 7—Kevin Featherstone; 8—Justin Cage; 9—Morgus the Maniac; 10—Marc Mandrake.

NORTHEAST WRESTLING: Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Jerry Lawler; 2—Al Snow; 3—Sgt. Slaughter; 4—Julio Dinero; 5—Chris Sabin; 6—Romeo Roselli; 7—Ralph Mosca; 8—Kamala; 9—Dusty Rhodes; 10—D-Lo Brown.

NWA FLORIDA: Champion—Steve Madison; 1—Bruce Steele; 2—Roderick Strong; 3—Rod Steel; 4—Todd Shane; 5—Eric Stevens; 6—Vordell Walker; 7—Danny Doring; 8—Mike Shane; 9—Marcus Dillon; 10—Cuban Assassin.

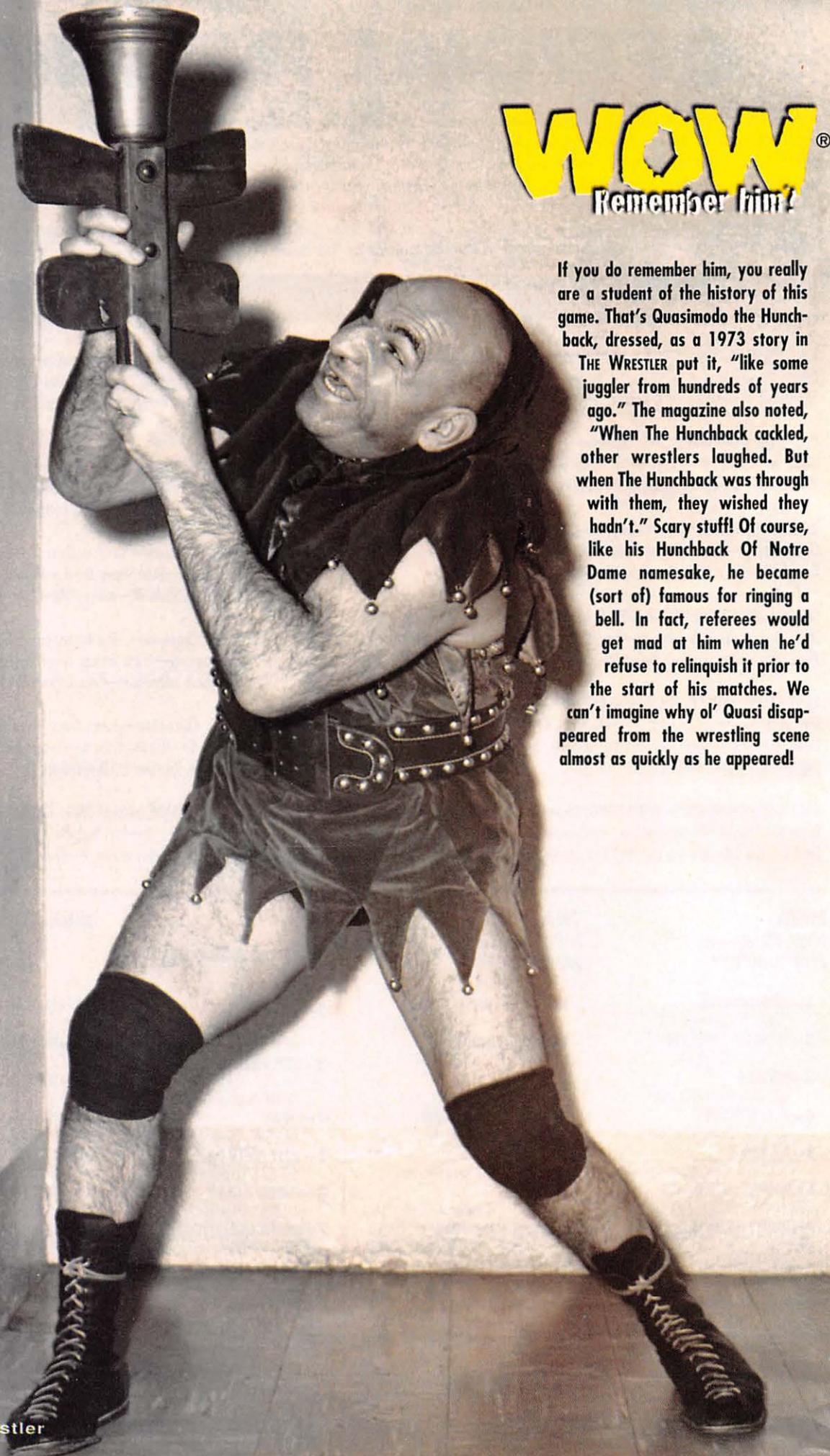
NWA VIRGINIA: Champion—The Barbarian; 1—David Flair; 2—Preston Quinn; 3—Phil Brown; 4—Frank Parker; 5—Dirty Money; 6—Sean Lei; 7—Scotty Blaze; 8—Hubie Johnson; 9—Sean Calloway; 10—Donnie Dollars.

NWA WILDSIDE: Champion—Jason Cross; 1—Onyx; 2—Altar Boy Luke; 3—Mikal Adryan; 4—Murder One; 5—Jeremy V; 6—Gabriel; 7—Todd Sexton; 8—Fast Eddie; 9—Slim J; 10—Delirious.

PREMIER CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING: Champion—Chuck Lee; 1—Billy Maverick; 2—Jimmy Golden; 3—Paul Michaels; 4—Blade; 5—Buff Bagwell; 6—Mike Stone; 7—Grunge; 8—J.T. Money; 9—Overkill; 10—Tim Lightning.

JAPAN
1—KENTA KOBASHI
(1) 282, Fukuchiyama, Japan
GHC heavyweight champion
2—TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(2) 245, Ashikaga, Japan
All-Japan Triple Crown champion
3—KENSUKE SASAKI
(-) 251, Tokyo, Japan
IWGP heavyweight champion
4—HEAT
(9) 204, Tokyo, Japan
5—JUN AKIYAMA
(7) 225, Hiroshima, Japan
6—TIGER MASK IV
(-) 170, Urayasu, Japan
7—GENICHIRO TENRYU
(-) 235, Tokyo, Japan
8—TAIYO KEEA
(-) 235, Honolulu, HI
9—YUJI NAGATA
(6) 228, Tokyo, Japan
10—KEIJI MUTO
(5) 245, Yamanashi, Japan

MEXICO
1—MR. NIEBLA
(3) 185, Cuauhtlan, Mexico
2—EL HIJO DEL SANTO
(4) 180, Tulancingo, Mexico
3—ULTIMO GUERRERO
(-) 173, Mexico City, Mexico
4—HEAVY METAL
(-) 180, Mexico City, Mexico
5—L.A. PARK
(6) 235, Torreon, Mexico
6—HECTOR GARZA
(2) 220, Monterrey, Mexico
7—SHOCKER
(-) 185, Guadalajara, Mexico
8—LATIN LOVER
(7) 190, Monterrey, Mexico
9—NEGRO CASAS
(8) 175, Mexico City, Mexico
10—ATLANTIS
(5) 180, Guadalajara, Mexico



WOW®

Remember him?

If you do remember him, you really are a student of the history of this game. That's Quasimodo the Hunchback, dressed, as a 1973 story in

THE WRESTLER put it, "like some juggler from hundreds of years ago." The magazine also noted, "When The Hunchback cackled, other wrestlers laughed. But when The Hunchback was through with them, they wished they hadn't." Scary stuff! Of course, like his Hunchback Of Notre Dame namesake, he became (sort of) famous for ringing a bell. In fact, referees would get mad at him when he'd refuse to relinquish it prior to the start of his matches. We can't imagine why ol' Quasi disappeared from the wrestling scene almost as quickly as he appeared!

trish
STRATUS

WWE women's champion

Photo by Gary Dineen



triple
H

WWE Raw champion
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•john
BRADSHAW LAYFIELD

WWE Smackdown champion

Photo by Gary Dineen



THE MAGAZINE THAT RIPS THE LID OFF PRO WRESTLING

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His frustration might have clouded his good judgment

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Not even a very serious injury could make this TNA diva quit

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KENNY BOLIN IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR WRESTLING'S NEXT SUPERSTAR
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GUARANTEED TO PUT POUNDS OF GOLD AROUND HIS WAIST!
The former (Super) Nova is very clever and adaptable

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Mania could be the next massive Islander to make it to WWE

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"THE BIG RED MACHINE" COULD SPELL THE END OF "MEAN" GENE
And that end could come before his WWE career really gets started

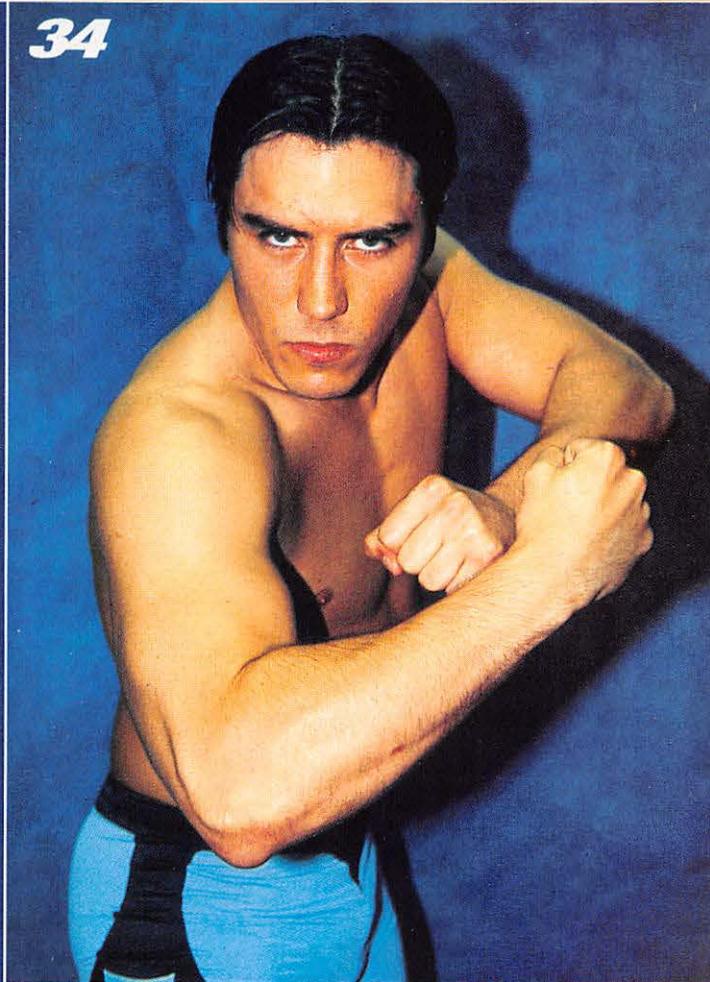
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Don't buy into their sudden and bizarre, um, conversion

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OUR PLAN TO HELP PAT KENNEY REGAIN HIS LUSTER
The potential for stardom has been there for years

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TNA VS. ROH?

I have a piece of advice for Jeff Jarrett as he leads TNA into its new business plan: Pick a fight with Ring of Honor and do it on pay-per-view. Call out Samoa Joe, or whoever the current ROH champion is—and then invite him to wrestle you on pay-per-view. Make sure that you make the challenge intriguing enough for ROH and Joe himself to accept—and then have the match!

Why go this route? It's simple. I believe it was Eric Bischoff who said, "Controversy equals cash," and a feud of this sort would certainly be very controversial. See, right now, you're not competing with WWE. Forget that idea. Put it out of your head. ROH is your main competition, and it seems to me that ROH has a ton of fans who consider themselves loyal. TNA fans, on the other hand, are kind of wishy-washy.

And if they are loyal, then they are not very vocal about their feelings on TNA. This is while ROH fans continually sing the company's praises and buy enough of

the promotion's DVDs to keep the promotion chugging along.

Imagine the excitement surrounding a TNA vs. ROH feud. Allow TNA wrestlers to compete against ROH wrestlers on ROH shows. Allow ROH wrestlers to compete against TNA wrestlers on TNA shows. Make sure the championships of both promotions get put on the line in matches featuring wrestlers from both promotions. Let the bad blood between you two boil over. I guarantee that such a feud would draw a ton of interest from the wrestling community and would raise awareness of both promotions.

RYAN MARSH
Dundalk, MD

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY

WWE management had better be careful with its new hiring procedures. In case you're wondering what I'm talking about, I'll spell it out for you: the \$250,000 Raw diva search and the \$1,000,000 *Tough Enough* contest.

What are other WWE wrestlers supposed to think about these contests? Are they supposed to welcome Chrissy Hemme (the winner of the diva search) and the eventual winner of the *Tough Enough* competition into their clique with open arms? Are they supposed to forget that they never paid any dues, never spent time on the independent circuit, and most likely got into the sport simply to make a quick buck? Are they supposed to walk up to them and shake their hands just because they won some silly contest?

I understand that WWE management is trying to find new ways to promote the company. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, I think that the original *Tough Enough* concept was a good one, with the winners being guaranteed nothing but a developmental contract. If they didn't pan out, no harm, no foul. What I don't agree with is WWE's new policy of awarding



Ring of Honor champ Samoa Joe would be a good fit in TNA, as part of an ROH faction in a feud with TNA, according to reader Ryan Marsh.

big contracts to unproven commodities while wrestlers who are already on the roster and who have spent years in the sport get the shaft. It's not right, and if enough bad blood comes out of it, it will backfire on WWE in a very big way.

JOHN WELSH
New York, NY

DRAGON LOVER

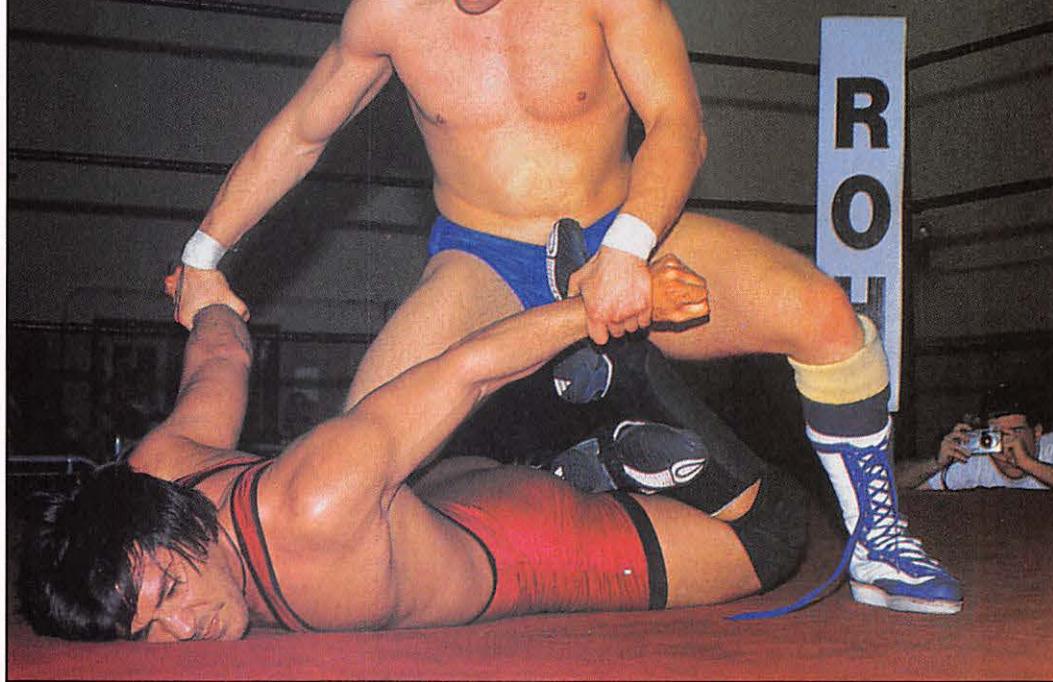
Fans are always debating who the best wrestler on the independent circuit is and, generally, the same names are bandied about: A.J. Styles, Christopher Daniels, Samoa Joe, C.M. Punk, and Low-Ki. I agree that all those guys are good, but I believe the best of the best is Bryan Danielson, whom a lot of people know as American Dragon. He's not as flashy as some of those other guys, but what he lacks in charisma, he makes up in sheer wrestling ability and intensity. I buy as many of his matches on DVD as possible, and if he's ever in my area, which isn't often enough for me, I make sure to get a ticket to the event. He hasn't ever disappointed me, and I think he's even getting better.

BOBBY FENWICK
Talleyville, DE

ORANGE ALL OVER

Tazz is a man who sometimes gets lost in the Smackdown shuffle. Everyone forgets that when he first stepped into the number-one color commentator position, he was new to the job and experienced quite a lot of growing pains. His commentary wasn't smooth, he often seemed as if he didn't know what to say next, and he genuinely seemed as if he'd rather be wrestling than talking behind a microphone.

Now, however, if you take a look around the sport at all the color commentators, Tazz is clearly the best of



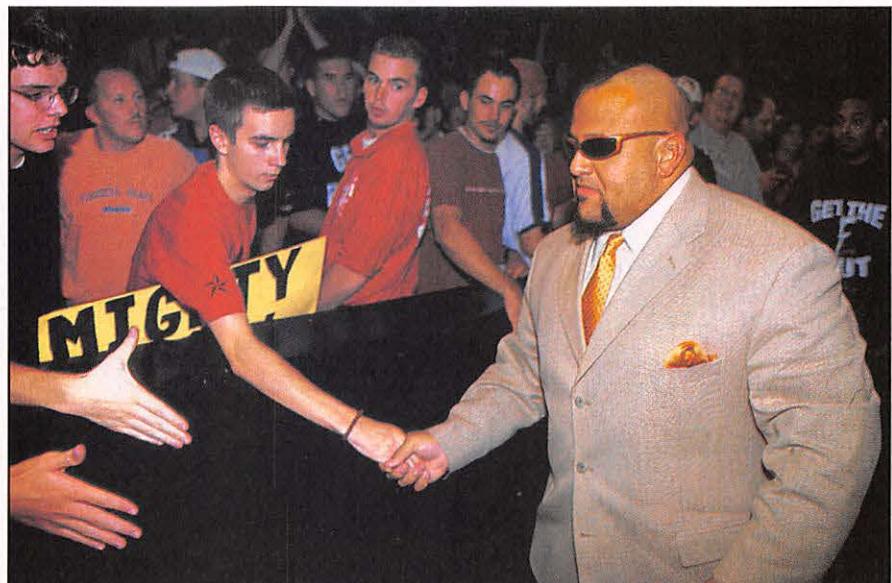
Looking for the best wrestler on the indy circuit. Look no further than Bryan "American Dragon" Danielson, writes Bobby Fenwick.

them all. He doesn't rely on a cliched character as Jerry "The King" Lawler does, and he also doesn't get over-excited like TNA's Don West. If you go back a few years, I'd say that he's better than anyone WCW had on its announcing roster, and he's certainly

easier to listen to than ECW's Joey Styles ever was.

Right now, Tazz is the best at what he does—and the man deserves some praise.

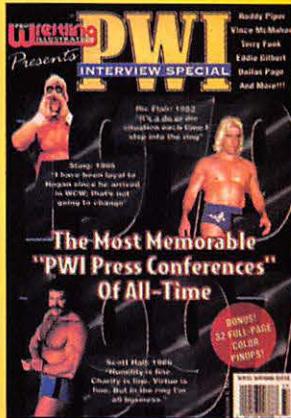
JIM SHERIDAN
Fairwood, WA □



Many old ECW fans miss seeing Tazz wrestle in WWE, but Jim Sheridan thinks he is the best color commentator in the sport today.

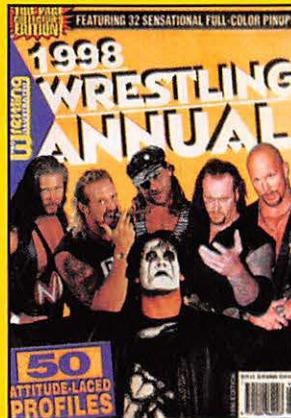
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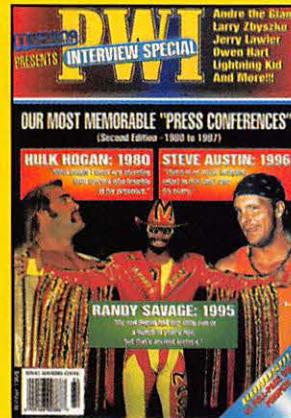
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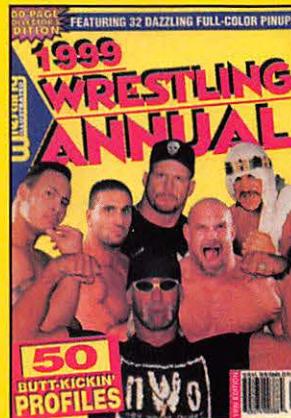
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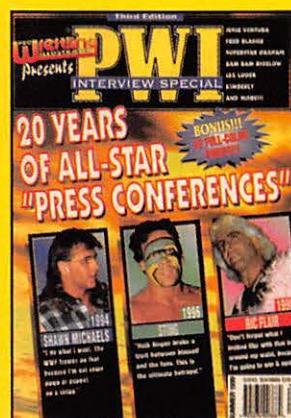
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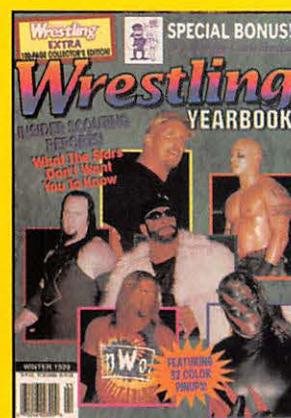
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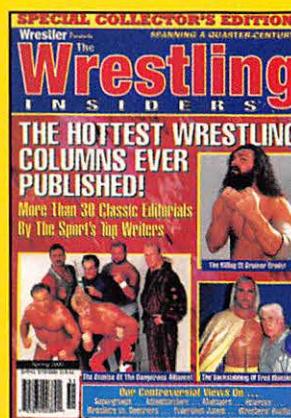
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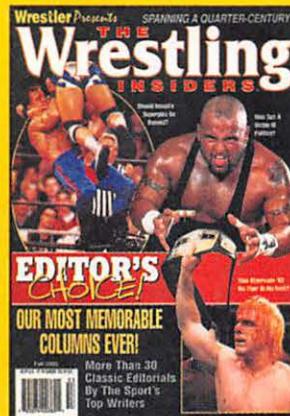
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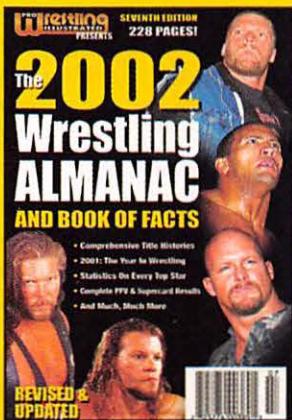
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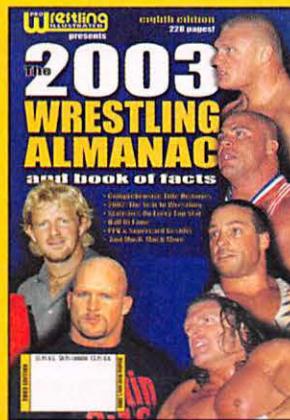
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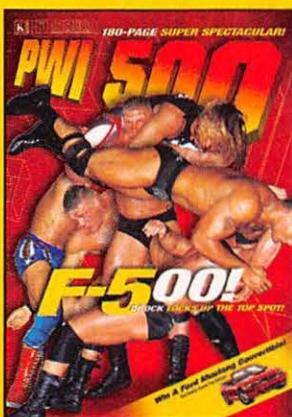
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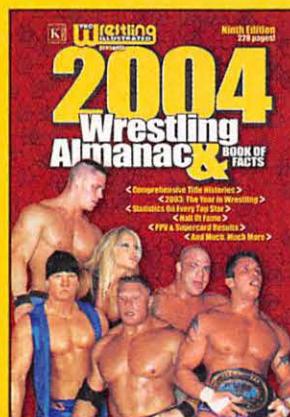
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By Harry Burkett

HAILED AS WWE'S first-ever interactive pay-per-view, Taboo Tuesday is now history—and only time will tell whether it was a success. Taboo Tuesday was an experiment for WWE, and not just in the sense that most fans were led to believe. The true experiment is to see if Raw-brand PPVs will score higher buy rates on Tuesday, the night following *WWE Raw* on Spike TV, or if the traditional Sunday night time slot works best.

Unfortunately, WWE probably won't be able to get a truly accurate read on Taboo Tuesday, which aired on October 19. The previous night's *Raw* and Taboo Tuesday itself had to compete directly against the Boston Red Sox playing the New York Yankees in the American League Championship Series on Fox. That's something that could have affected the pay-per-view buy rate. So, although this was WWE's first Tuesday PPV in nearly 13 years, it probably won't be its last.

WWE emphasized the interactive nature of Taboo Tuesday, allowing fans to vote for matches and stipulations on wwe.com and also allowing the crowd in Milwaukee to have a say. WWE reported that its Web site received four million hits as a result, so that kind of traffic ensures that fan participation will become a permanent fixture.

Not surprisingly, WWE played it safe by allowing only a

limited number of options for fans. In the official polling, 54 percent of fans selected the steel cage as the special stipulation for **Randy Orton's** grudge match against **Ric Flair**, with falls-count-anywhere and submission-only bouts finishing at 20 percent and 17 percent, respectively. Orton made the most of the stipulation, ducking a chair shot and using the RKO on Flair after 10 minutes of action. Just like Orton's match against **Chris Benoit** at SummerSlam, this encounter ended in a handshake, with the "Nature Boy" initiating the show of respect. Orton seemed genuinely concerned with Flair's massive blood loss after the match.

The fans handpicked Raw champion **Triple-H's** challenger for the co-main event, with **Shawn Michaels** outscoring **Edge** and Benoit. The gutsy Michaels went ahead with the title opportunity despite suffering a meniscus tear in his knee the previous night in a three-way against Benoit and Edge. While this match didn't live up to the standard Helmsley and Michaels have set in their other epic encounters, HBK gritted through and delivered a very good match. However, a jealous Edge—the winner of the three-way on *Raw*—entered the ring and gave Michaels a spear at the 14-minute mark, helping "The Game" retain the Raw title yet again. Three days later, Michaels underwent successful surgery to repair the meniscus tear in San Antonio.

Injured HBK gutted it out



ORTON: Spilled blood, beat a legend!

Photo by Gary Dineen



Because Edge and Benoit lost out in the voting for the Raw title match, they automatically received a shot at tag team champions **La Resistance**. Edge and Benoit had the advantage going into the match, considering they were former tag champs themselves, but Edge wasn't interested in tag team gold or in sharing any glory with Benoit. After 12 minutes, he walked out of the match, jumped into his rental car, and left the arena. Benoit did a fine job fending for himself, however, as he executed a series of German suplexes on **Robert Conway** and forced the faux Frenchman into submission with the crossface.

Shelton Benjamin turned in a great performance in the opening match, using a T-bone suplex to cleanly pin **Chris Jericho** for the Intercontinental title. It is Benjamin's biggest win to date and must be especially satisfying because he came so close to beating Orton for the same belt several months ago.

Also at Taboo Tuesday: **Christy** beat **Carmella** in a lingerie pillow fight ... **Eugene** defeated **Eric Bischoff**, who received a mean crew-cut as a result ... **Gene Snitsky** beat **Kane** in a chain match, using a chair to injure his throat and neck ... **Trish Stratus** retained the women's title in a schoolgirl battle royal.

It really wasn't interactive, but **Chris Cage** took advantage of some good luck to defeat **Matt Morgan** for the Ohio Valley heavyweight championship on October 13 at Louisville's Davis Arena. For two weeks, Morgan had been holding his own "Blueprint Invitational," in which he would place a bunch of names in a hat to determine a lucky challenger for his heavyweight title. One week, he even promised to have his head shaved if he lost. Sounds sporting, right? Well, not really, considering that he only put in the names of wrestlers he knew he could easily defeat.

Count on **Jim Cornette** to up the ante. When Morgan vowed to leave the promotion if he lost, the OVW promoter dared him to place the names of every single OVW wrestler in the hat. He pulled out the name of Cage, best known as a former Southern tag champ and the partner of **Tank Toland**. The turning point in their match occurred when Morgan missed a legdrop, giving Cage time to mount the top turnbuckle and catch the champion with a beautiful flying bodypress. Three beats of the mat later, Cage became the new OVW champion.

Cornette also played a key role in the reunion of the legendary **Midnight Express** on October 2. **Bobby Eaton** and **Dennis Condrey**, along with **Stan Lane** (Condrey's eventual replacement), joined Cornette at a Ring of Honor event in Philadelphia. All four men had touching words for **Ray Taylor**, who, as **Big Bubba Rogers**, served as an

Cage got "invited" by Cornette



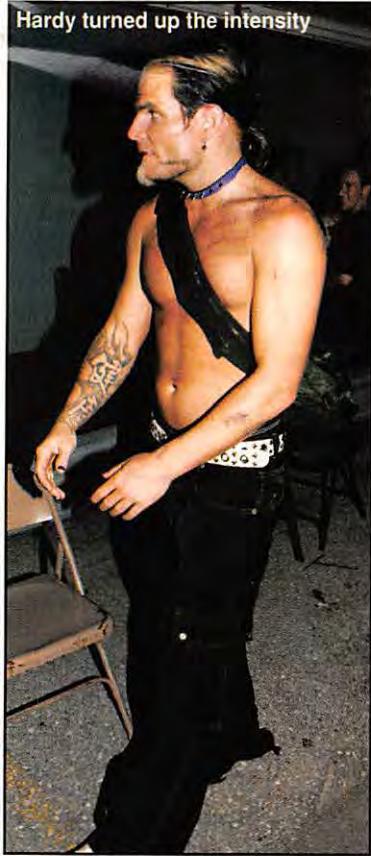
enforcer for the Express in the mid-1980s. Best known as the WWF's **Big Bossman**, the 42-year-old Taylor died of a massive heart attack at his home on September 22.

Leave it to **Prince Nana** to ruin the moment. Nana entered the ring and announced he had paid to bring in "the real Express." To the crowd's surprise, **Rick Morton** of **The Rock 'n' Roll Express**—minus **Robert Gibson**—got into a verbal altercation with Cornette. At that moment, **Jimmy Rave**, **Diablo Santiago**, and **Oman Tortuga** jumped the Express. "Beautiful" Bobby, "Loverboy" Dennis, and "Sweet" Stan fought off all four men. Morton pushed Nana into the Midnights and fled the scene. Eaton climbed to the top rope and came down hard on Nana with the Express' famed rocket launcher.

Minutes later, Ring of Honor champion **Samoa Joe**—who has reigned since March 2003—battled "American Dragon" **Bryan Danielson** in a breathtaking main event. Joe came out on top, but it was only the first of three impressive title defenses in October. On October 15 in Dayton, Ohio, he turned back the strong challenge of **Rotweiler** member **Rocky Romero**. The following night in Chicago Ridge, Illinois, Joe went to an amazing one-hour draw with **C.M. Punk**. In terms of endurance and ability, Punk is the best 60-minute man in the business today. With **Rick Steamboat** as his new adviser, Punk should get only better in that regard. It will

Going for two years, Samoa Joe?





Hardy turned up the intensity

be interesting to see whether Punk stands up for "pure wrestling" in Steamboat's philosophical feud with hardcore legend **Mick Foley**.

TNA seems to be gaining momentum in its effort to gain more exposure. In a blockbuster announcement, TNA Entertainment President **Dixie Carter** confirmed that her company would be working with *The Best Damn Sports Show Period*—the highest-rated program on Fox Sports Net—to deliver two 90-minute prime time specials. Considering *Impact* is carried in the wee hours of the morning or not at all in some FSN markets, this move should

force wrestling-sour regional operators to give TNA more visibility. The shows were to be taped at Orlando's Universal Studios on October 27.

"I've been with a lot of big women, but never with little men," said *Best Damn Sports* co-host **Tom Arnold**, who was slated to referee a hardcore match between midgets. "It's going to be a new and exciting experience for me."

That tidbit is enough to make me worry about the content of the specials. I suppose if TNA can use midget hardcore matches to lure a broader demographic of viewers, but perhaps hook them with the X division, then the shows could be worthwhile.

The resulting publicity should help TNA boost buy rates for its first Sunday night pay-per-view, *Victory Road*, scheduled for November 7. As their ladder match for the NWA title loomed, **Jeff Hardy** seemed to be more intense than heavyweight champion **Jeff Jarrett**. Consider the October 19 taping of *Impact*, for example. Jarrett pinned preliminary wrestler **Ryan O'Reilly** in a match that lasted less than two minutes. After Jarrett pulled out a ladder and whipped O'Reilly into it, Hardy arrived and planted the champ headfirst into the mat. Hardy climbed to the top of the ladder, ready to deliver the swanton bomb, but Jarrett slid out of the ring at the last moment.

In that night's main event, Hardy teamed with **Ron Killings** and **A.J. Styles** to defeat **Bobby Rude**, **Ruffy Silverstein**, and **Eric Young**. Hardy subdued Silverstein with the twist of fate for the victory. Ever the sore losers, the members of **Team Canada**—joined by X champ **Pete Williams**—attacked Hardy, Killings, and Styles after the match. Fortunately, **B.G. James** and **Konnan** came to

NEWS ANALYSIS

FLAIR IS STILL BREATHING. "Legend Killer" is a tough nickname, but is it really possible to kill legends in pro wrestling? Although Ric Flair lost to Randy Orton inside the steel cage at Taboo Tuesday, the "Nature Boy" only enhanced his legend in that match. The 55-year-old Flair spilled buckets of blood and kept going against a prime athlete less than half his age. Orton didn't kill the legend. He just made him stronger.

THE CLOCK STRIKES 12 AGAIN. The *Midnight Express* retains a mythical aura on the independent circuit. The *Backseat Boyz* even use the old *Midnight Express* theme for their ring entrance. Why? It's because the *Midnights* were so far ahead of their time in terms of attitude and technical skills. The ROH fans were thrilled to see Eaton, Condrey, and Lane, but I'm sure the purists were asking, "Where the heck is Randy Rose?"

WHERE'S ROSEANNE? Promoters have often made the mistake of bringing the wrong celebrities into wrestling. Jay Leno teaming with Dallas Page against Eric Bischoff and Hollywood Hogan was a dud. So was *WrestleMania* II guest commentator Susan St. James, who admitted she had never watched the WWF before. But Tom Arnold has the right attitude to be a perfect fit. How about Tom vs. ex-wife Roseanne in the ring?

THE OSAMA FACTOR. It was only a matter of time before WWE capitalized on the terrorist threat and recruited some stereotypical Muslims. Right now, Mohammed Hassan (Mark Magnus) and Ali Ashad (Shawn Daivari) are training in Ohio Valley and have appeared at WWE house shows and in dark matches. If WWE had to convert Magnus into an evil Muslim, why not have Daivari as an up-standing Muslim? It's only fair.

DID JESSE APPROVE THAT MESSAGE? Ventura, who for years has railed against the "corrupt" two-party system, endorsed Democratic candidate John Kerry for President. That was fine. But if Ventura couldn't even demonstrate enough respect for Kerry to give a verbal show of support, then what good was the endorsement? Jesse could have been a great public servant, but his ego has caused him to self-destruct.

the rescue, and Hardy cornered Team Canada's manager, **Scott D'Amore**. Hardy pulled out a ladder, climbed to the top of it, and delivered a swanton onto the rotund D'Amore. As Hardy stood on the corner turnbuckle and celebrated, Jarrett entered the ring and smashed him over the head with a guitar.

News from All-Japan Pro Wrestling: A number of former WWE stars have recently appeared in All-Japan, including **Bull Buchanan**, **D-Lo Brown**, and **Jamal** (for-

D-Lo is down with All-Japan



merly of **Three Minute Warning**). In case you're wondering why Brown made only occasional appearances months ago and hasn't been in TNA at all lately, it's because he was essentially forced to choose between the two companies, and he chose Japan ... **Keiji Muto** continues to dominate the promotion and has found reliable allies in **Satoshi Kojima** and ex-WCW star **Kaz Hayashi** ... Muto's age has become a topic of discussion among insiders, but compared to other wrestlers appearing regularly in All-Japan, he's a young lion. **Abdullah the Butcher** is 60, and **Genichiro Tenryu** (considered by some as the "Ric Flair of the Orient") is 54 and still going strong.

This 'n' that: **Gene Okerlund** has finally received a kidney transplant and is said to be doing well ... Ratings fell for the October 21 airing of *Smackdown* because of competition from the National League Championship Series on Fox, yet the debuting *Tough Enough* segment did well and the show beat all other network programming among teenage boys ... Edge got married in late-October. No wonder he abandoned Chris Benoit at Taboo Tuesday and left the arena in such a hurry ... **Brock Lesnar** might have fumbled on the football field, but his official Minnesota Vikings jersey is still a big seller in the merchandising department ... **Mark Magnus**, who has supposedly converted to

Islam and is now known as **Mohammed Hassan**, has demanded air time on Ohio Valley's weekly programs. OVW has conceded to the demand instead of risking a lawsuit from Hassan's manager, **Ali Ashad**, formerly known as **Shawn Daivari** (for more on this, see the story on page 66).

From the No Body Cares About Jesse Dept.: **Jesse Ventura** joined another independent politician on October 23 to endorse Senator **John Kerry** for President during a press conference at Minnesota's State Capitol. Although Ventura had obviously changed his mind since saying, "I have no one to vote for," he still wasn't very vocal in his support for Kerry. In fact, he let former Maine Governor **Angus King** do all the talking.

King was dapperly dressed in a gray business suit, while Ventura showed up in blue jeans and a T-shirt, as if he just came from a biker rally. Speaking for Ventura, King said, "He plans to vote for John Kerry. But he doesn't want to subject himself to the tender mercies of the Minnesota press."

The pesky Minnesota press corps followed Ventura to his Porsche convertible outside. He turned to the reporters and said, "You attacked my children," before driving away. When Ventura opted not to run for re-election in 2002, he accused the press of giving inaccurate reports of his son, **Tyrel**, throwing wild parties in the governor's mansion.

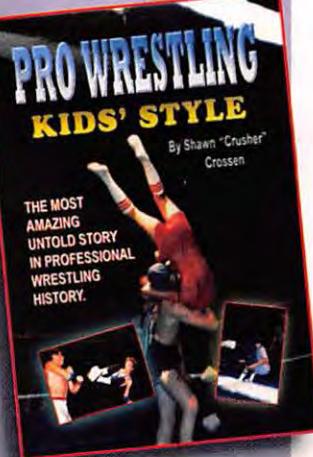
While the Kerry campaign had only good words to say about Ventura's endorsement, state Republican chair **Ron Ebensteiner** released a statement: "Ventura exhausted any goodwill or credibility he had with Minnesota voters a long time ago. Having Jesse 'The Malcontent' Ventura's support—albeit silent support—is yet one more liability for John Kerry in Minnesota."

Perhaps Ventura's ex-colleague **Keith Olbermann** put it best: "It looked as if Ventura just wanted to stand there and not do or say anything. It was a lot like his talk show here on MSNBC." Interestingly, he's still collecting contract payments from MSNBC long after the cancellation of his Saturday night program, *Jesse Ventura's America*.

See you at the matches!

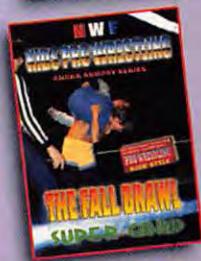
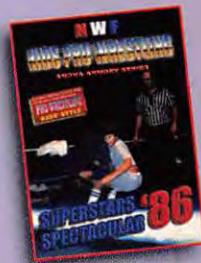


Jesse supported Kerry ... we think



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Summer Sizzler EXTRAVAGANZA

Saturday, July 26th, 1986 marked the NWF's return to the Anoka Armory. Several big matches were signed including The Super Ds getting their rematch with The Rough Russians, The Barbarians defending against The Dream Team, and Crusher Crossen up against Mr. X for the NWF World Title. This DVD is full of NWF action second to none.

THE FALL BRAWL SUPER CARD

Saturday, October 18th, 1986 marked the biggest card ever promoted by the NWF at the Anoka Armory, with a complete sellout as over 450 plus fans attended this event. Several big matches including Crusher Crossen against Mr. Macho and Kid Kelsey against Slick Steenerson, but the big main event featured 6'-8" 272 lbs. Luscious Larry against the NWF's very own Pretty Boy Taylor.

Superstars Spectacular '87

Saturday, August 23rd, 1987 marked the NWF's final card promoted at the Anoka Armory. On this card were several NWF stars such as The Invaders, The Destructors, and The Ice Dragon. But the big one was Crusher Crossen defending his NWF title against long time friend and now enemy Kid "Hot Stuff" Kelsey. An amazing night of wrestling as the NWF promoted it's sequel to the event that started it all back in 1986.

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data sheet

REY MISTERIO JR.

HEIGHT: 5'3"

WEIGHT: 163

HOMETOWN: San Diego, CA

GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE:

Winning the WCW cruiserweight title by beating Dean Malenko in such spectacular fashion and so soon after his WCW debut on July 8, 1996. It signaled the beginning of a wonderful era for cruiserweight wrestling in the U.S.

HE DOES IT SO WELL: Thinks on his feet (and in the air). Not only is he great at countering opponents' moves, but he can anticipate others countering *his* moves and come up with a counter to the counter.

WHERE HE NEEDS TO IMPROVE: We'd like to see him get back to taking more risks and being more innovative, the way he did in ECW and WCW. He's been relying too much on the same set of (sensational) moves.

PET FINISHER: West Coast pop (huracanrana)

BIGGEST TEST TO DATE: How hard do you think it was for someone his size to get people to take him seriously as a wrestler, let alone those in the major federations?

OUTLOOK FOR 2005: Give up the dream of seeing Misterio rising to a new level in WWE. The Smackdown title will never be his to fight for. Vince McMahon sees him as a player in the tag team and cruiserweight divisions. Is that disappointing? Perhaps, but it's good news for fans of the tag team and cruiserweight divisions.

QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS: "So many cruiserweights have had their little runs at the top in the time since he came on the scene, but ask anyone who the best cruiserweight in the world is, and I bet he tells you without even thinking that it's Misterio. That tells you how great he is."

—Smackdown commentator Tazz



data sheet

Photo By Vern Verna

SONJAY DUTT

HEIGHT: 5'8"

WEIGHT: 185

HOMETOWN: Bollywood, India

GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE:
Being named a member of Team NWA and thus a competitor in America's X Cup action in TNA

HE DOES IT SO WELL: High-flying maneuvers. His work above the ring is truly breathtaking

WHERE HE NEEDS TO IMPROVE:
Seasoning. Dutt has a well-rounded arsenal of moves and has a great natural talent and presence about him. He just needs to gain more confidence if he's to become an elite star in TNA, on the independent circuit, and perhaps beyond

PET FINISHER: The Hindusault (flying corkscrew 450 splash)

BIGGEST TEST TO DATE: Defeating Christopher Daniels to win the MLW light heavyweight title in a tournament final

OUTLOOK FOR 2005: Dutt should emerge as a breakout star in TNA's X division. He should be able to TNA fans some spectacular matches, and they should get to know a little more of his personality as well

QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS: "Dutt reminds me a lot of Sabu. He has that same reckless high-flying style but without all of the injuries that Sabu has accumulated over the years." —Scott D'Amore



on the road

With Dave Lenker

BILLY KIDMAN HAS a point. I was there. I saw how hard his knee crashed into Chavo Guerrero Jr.'s skull. I witnessed Guerrero's head rock back, watched him momentarily grimace, and then saw

him go eerily motionless. He wasn't moving. For a while, he was barely talking. I was concerned that he was even breathing. So were a lot of other people. Emergency medical technicians came running down to ringside. So did Stephanie McMahon. Jamie Noble was right there too—and studying the look of concern on his face made me realize what he must have been thinking:

This could have been me.

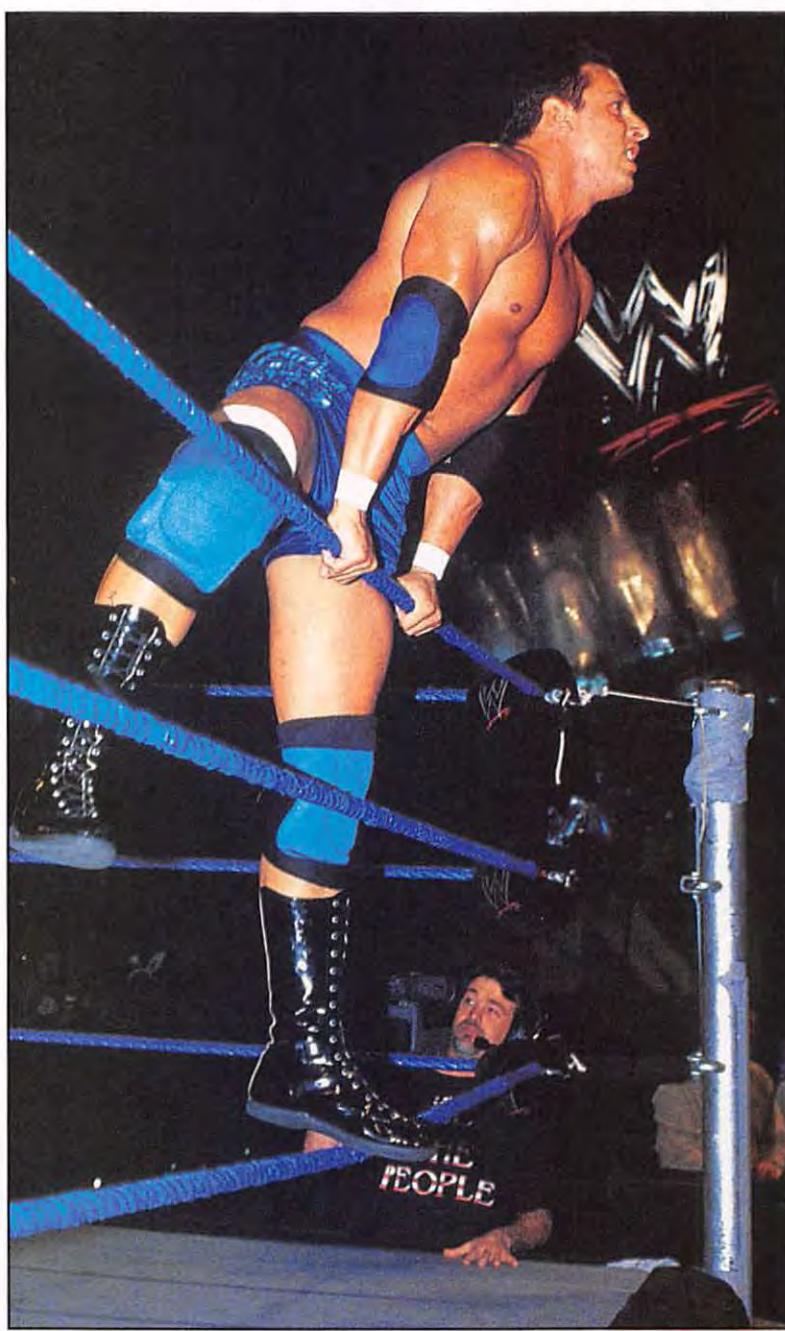
I've been covering this sport for more than 11 years now, and watching Chavo Guerrero Jr. lay motionless in the ring for minutes on end was one of the scariest things I have ever seen. It ranks right up there with Rick Steiner stuffing Buff Bagwell's neck into the mat with a botched flying bulldog and Owen Hart crunching "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin's vertebrae with a badly executed tombstone piledriver.

As for Hart's accident, I hope that we don't see anything that scary again.

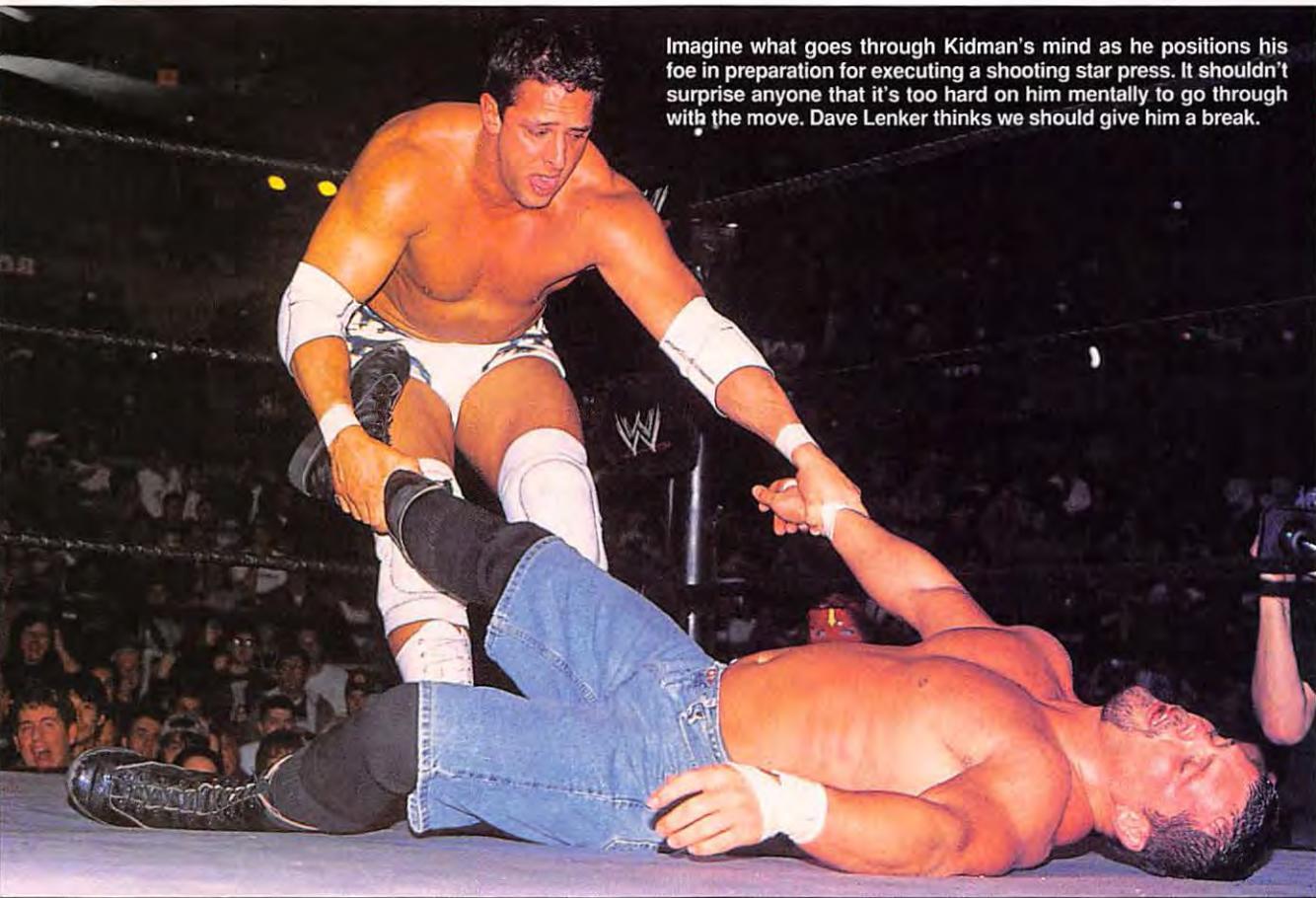
But back to Kidman. Thanks to the Guerrero incident, he's afraid to use the shooting star press. He just wanted to beat Guerrero, not send him to the emergency room. He's attempted to go to the top rope and execute the move since then, but psychologically, he's been unable to go for it. Instead, he's given up on matches and even walked out on his partner, Paul London, during a match for the Smackdown tag team championship.

A week after that happened, London attempted to fire Kidman up by slapping him across the face during an interview segment. It didn't work. Dejected at the lack of faith his partner was showing him, Kidman walked away with his shoulders slumped and his head hung low. A week later, they were scheduled to wrestle each other, but Kidman forfeited that match when he refused to lock up against London, giving London the match by countout. As of press time, their future as a tag team was uncertain, but they certainly seemed more likely to break up than to regain the Smackdown tag team title. And somehow through all of this, Kidman has become the bad guy.

Someone needs to explain this to me. A wrestler seriously injures another wrestler with his signature move—a move regarded as one of the most dangerous in the sport to



When Billy Kidman ascends the turnbuckles prior to his match, he can count on being booed heavily by WWE fans. All because he won't use the shooting star press ... which is because he nearly seriously injured Chavo Guerrero Jr. with it. Is that fair?



Imagine what goes through Kidman's mind as he positions his foe in preparation for executing a shooting star press. It shouldn't surprise anyone that it's too hard on him mentally to go through with the move. Dave Lenker thinks we should give him a break.

both the man taking it and the man executing it—and then gets booed and catcalled when he refuses to use it anymore. This, of course, makes him become defensive. He calls the fans "bloodthirsty," which makes the situation worse. He becomes a punk not only in the eyes of the fans, but also in the eyes of his partner, a man with whom he captured tag team gold. He's putting the safety of his fellow wrestlers ahead of his own personal success, but because of that, he has become one of the most disliked members of the roster.

My question is this: What has Billy Kidman done that is so wrong?

Okay, it's easy to understand London's point of view. He needs a partner upon whom he can depend. He needs to know that he's wrestling with someone who has his back no matter what and will do anything and everything within his limits to win the match. He doesn't want to wrestle with a partner who gives 100 percent during most of the match, but then backs away like a scared child when it's time to put the match away. Wrestling like that leaves the opposition with a gaping hole that they'll surely try to take advantage of, and it also endangers the health and welfare of both Kidman and London.

Have no doubt: Every second that Kidman stands atop the top rope and wavers between executing the shooting star press and not using it, he's leaving himself open to injury. He's giving his opponents time to push

him off the top rope or, even worse, attack him with a high-impact move of their very own. He's also leaving London—who is focusing intently on whether or not Kidman will come off the top with the maneuver—open to an attack from the outside. It's a distraction for both wrestlers, and in professional wrestling, distractions lead to poor win-loss records and, sometimes, injuries.

Should Billy Kidman be wrestling in his current state of mind? Absolutely not. He's a danger to himself every time he steps into the ring and, perhaps more importantly, he's a danger to his opponent and anyone standing in his corner as his tag team partner. Maybe Kidman needs to take a few months off to get his head back in order. Maybe he needs to work out in the ring alone, all by himself or with a trusted sparring partner, to get his timing back. Maybe what he needs to do is devote himself to developing another finishing maneuver—one that's just as effective as the shooting star press but less inherently dangerous.

What Billy Kidman shouldn't be doing is feeling bad about giving up the shooting star press, forcing himself to wrestle matches that he's not mentally prepared to wrestle, or caring whether or not his tag team partner likes him at this very moment in time. Right now, he's carrying around a lot of baggage that looks a lot like Chavo Guerrero Jr. laying motionless in the ring. We can help him carry that baggage, or we can add to his load. It's your call as a fan, but if he's done anything to warrant our vitriol, I guess I haven't noticed. □

By Brandi Mankiewicz

(The opinions expressed in "The Insider" are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)

MET UP with an old friend for lunch today. The name may be familiar to the old school readers of the INSIDE WRESTLING family of magazines: Zenid Ambrabam. Zenid was introduced to our wonderful staff by former editor Gersh Kuntzman and she hung around longer than he did. Why? We had more use for her than him. She is a psychic, after all. What better way to get a clue as to who will be in the main event of the next WrestleMania than to have someone like her on your side—especially one as well-known and trusted as Zenid?

Yes, we employed a psychic. Got a problem with that?

Now, Zenid's return to our office was precipitated by me, as I begged Stu Saks to interview her for a position with the latest magazine to crawl its way onto our eclectic schedule: *Horoscope Guide*. Sure, it's a far cry from

wrestling, but it's an interesting publication, to say the least. Since our staff is comprised of sports freaks, I figured Zenid would be a good person to distill all of the astrobabble into elementary English for us.

As Zenid and I sat waiting for our entrees to be delivered to our table, we chatted about the state of wrestling, astrobabble, and our lives. Since leaving our staff, Zenid has spent the better part of 10 years helping a myriad police departments solve cold cases. Her life should be a series on The Discovery Channel, because it's damn interesting. I gave her a brief rundown of my current life, including my endless pursuit of a new position with the magazines. What happened next, though, is burned into my memory forever.

"I really can't understand why my title can't be czar," I said, eating a breadstick. "It fits me so well. I'm czar quality—"

"Say that again?" Zenid said, in a hushed, almost anxious voice.

"I want to be czar?" I repeated.

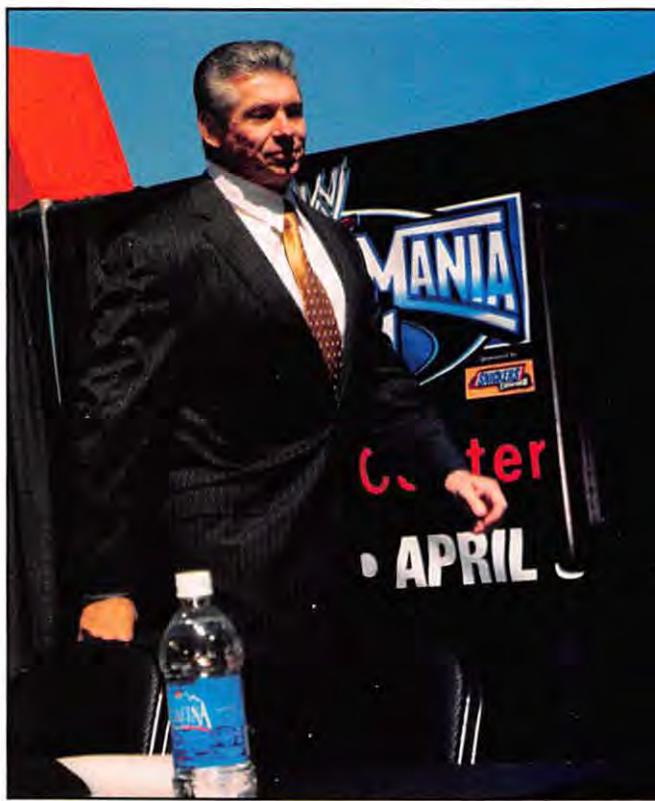
Suddenly, Zenid grabbed her rather large purse from under the table and rummaged through it until she pulled out her Tarot cards. For the next few minutes, she formed them into 12-card pattern and shook her head as she gazed at the various cards from the Major and Minor Arcana and scribbled notes into a leather-bound journal. While this might sound weird to you all, I've seen her do it many times before, so I knew to leave her alone. In the end, she gathered up her cards and handed me the journal.

"There's a message for Vince McMahon in there," she said before starting to eat her California roll. "Read it when you get back to the office."

With that, we returned to our regularly scheduled conversation.

A few hours later, when I was alone in my office, I opened the journal to the page marked with a piece of silk ribbon and found an amazing prophecy (and no, I don't mean a photo of Chris Daniels' faction from Ring of Honor). While you may laugh, I did not—especially after reading the passage that had just been written that afternoon. In essence: Something is rotten in the state of Connecticut. More specifically, Titan Tower.

According to Zenid, the person who will destroy the McMahon family is already in power. This person has slithered his way to the top in an unsavory fashion and is slowly overtaking the whole business in plain view of everyone—including Vince's closest associates. It was written that this revolutionary has used his butt-kissing



Vince McMahon had better be careful not to trust a certain man he is allowing to gain a little too much power inside WWE. How do I know? The great psychic Zenid Ambrabam told me so.

skills to climb up the corporate ladder quickly, while artfully dodging questions about why he's no longer employed by his former company. This smooth talker is riding on the reputation of his former job and has been all-too-eager to explain how he can make this promotion money, if the right people are given contracts. Ask him about something negative and his double-talk leads you to an oddly positive response.

Zenid prophesized that the rise in power of this individual has a direct karmatic link to the decline in business. As this person gains power, it is siphoned from other areas of the business, effectively killing off the roots of the company. While the McMahons are busy restructuring the company, booking National Guard Armories instead of branded mega-arenas, and reassuring both stockholders and employees alike that Triple-H is the future, they don't notice the grassroots movement to infiltrate every level of the company with those who are loyal to this nefarious person's cause. By the time the dastardly plan is discovered, it's too late.

There are several who see through his smokescreen and mirrors, and they try to tell Vince so, but they end up losing their jobs in the end. Vince trusts this man with his life, his business—and that will be his demise. Once Vince falls from grace, there's no saving any of this business.

ahem

Now, this whole prophecy may sound a little extreme to you, but it might very well come true. Zenid has rarely been wrong in the past. After all, Zenid hasn't watched a second of wrestling since leaving our company for her current work, so it's not like she's been contaminated with the Internet, dirt sheets, or our magazines. I do respect Zenid and her gift, but I also take it with a grain of salt. Even though business is down, it's not bad enough for WWE to start running Armories again. What's next? The Hamburg Fieldhouse? Heck, I do know that the old WWE light rigging still hangs in the rafters, so that's one less piece of equipment to take there.

One more note: She never did tell me if I'll upgrade from "Queen" to "Czar."



Many of you have probably concluded that it is Triple-H who is such a dangerous threat to the future of WWE. You are wrong, although the man's last name does begin with an "H."

*"Please allow me to introduce myself
I'm a man of wealth and taste
I've been around for a long, long year
Stole many a man's soul and faith"*

*"Pleased to meet you
Hope you guess my name"
— "Sympathy For The Devil," The Rolling Stones* □

on assignment

By Liz Hunter

I LOVE WRITING for the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* family of magazines. Amid all the complaining I do and the critical columns I write, maybe I don't point that out often enough, but I really, truly do. As all the writers here will tell you, wrestling is something that we hold near and dear to our hearts. This business and all its subtle nuances have had a hand in shaping popular culture for years. Knowing that one day I'll eventually finish my stint with this magazine is a scary thought. A girl needs to do a little long-term planning, you know? That's why I came up with a ter-

rific idea for myself following my time here. I was so excited about it that I needed to tell someone.

I walked into Stu Saks' office and took a seat in the tattered leather chair he refuses to replace because Andre the Giant once threw it or something. Somehow that makes it, according to Stu, "historic." I waited for him to hang up the phone and laid out my plan.

"You know, Stu, I've been thinking about the big picture. I'm happy with what I do here, but one day it will all be over. When the time comes that I leave the magazine, I think I'll write a book."

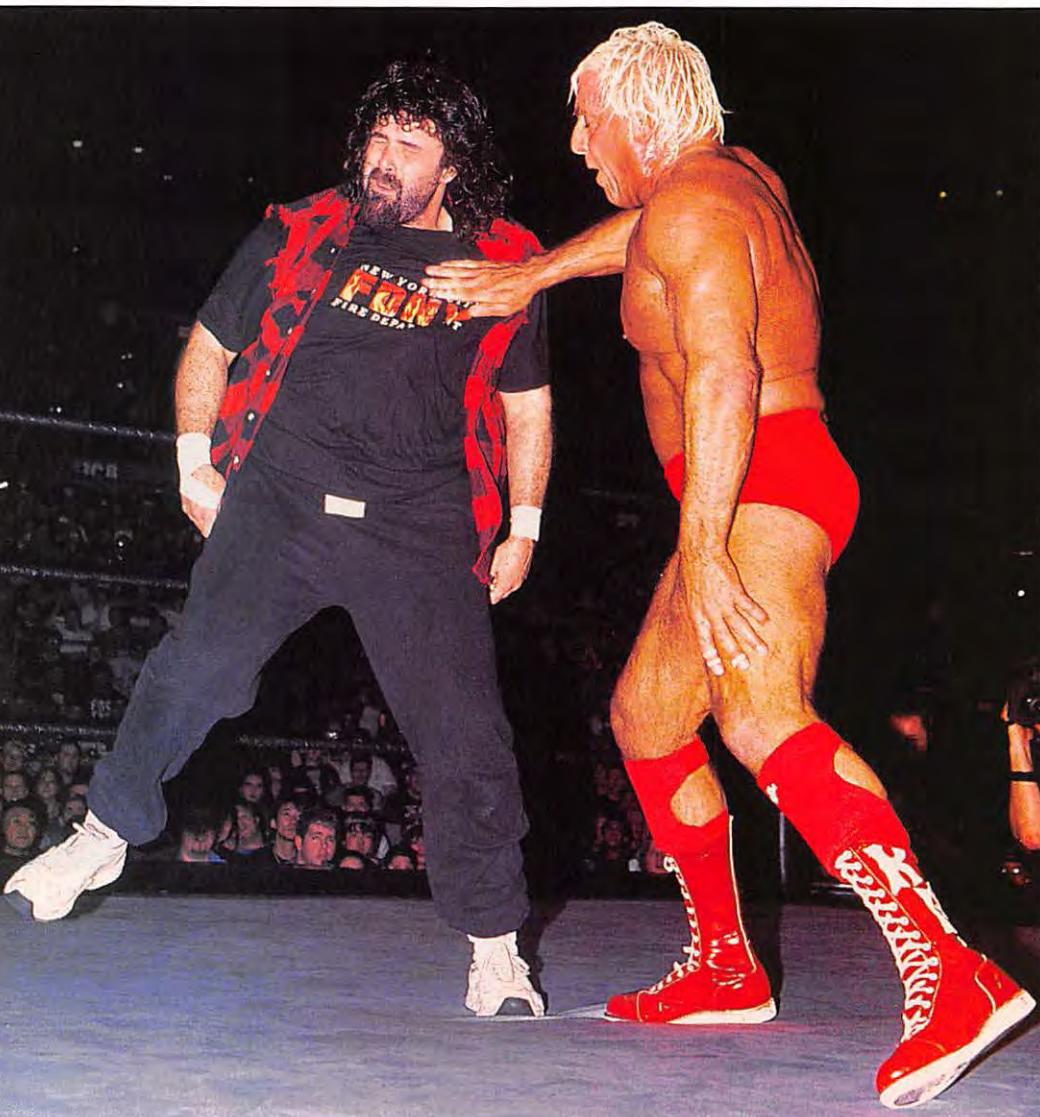
He didn't offer much reaction at first. Considering that we all call ourselves writers, the prospect of authoring a book didn't seem that monumental. His interest, however, was piqued.

"Sounds interesting, Liz. What do you plan on writing about?"

"Well," I replied. "I was thinking of doing a behind-the-scenes thing on our offices. I can retell the stories from our Christmas parties and explain how you tried to hold my career down. I'll slam Dave Lenker and Brandi Mankiewicz. Then, in the last chapter, I'll tell everyone why I'm a better writer than Matt Brock. Sound good?"

Stu didn't say much. He advised me to go home and asked that I "recharge my batteries." It was kind of shocking. After all, I was just following the business plan of today's retired grapplers. They seem to know what they're doing, right?

Why couldn't I be like Roddy Piper, ranting and raving about the unfairness of a cold industry?



Ric Flair probably thinks his stinging commentary on Mick Foley in his autobiography, *To Be The Man*, hurts the hardcore legend more than this blistering chop. Liz Hunter thinks it only serves to make Flair look bad.



Roddy Piper—shown in a 2002 photo with San Francisco mayor Willie Brown and Pepper Gomez—has spent a lot of time (and a lot of pages in his book) bellyaching about the wrestling business in recent years. Liz wonders why wrestlers feel the need to unnecessarily air so much dirty laundry in public.

Don't fans care about my uphill battle in a business that relies on using other people as steppingstones? Listening to "Hot Rod" complain about all the unfair things that this business has done to him is enough to make you forget all his achievements. His title reigns and successes are all presented in a different light. You know that his career wasn't as much about his battles in the ring as it was his battles outside of it. People want to hear about it ... and Roddy is more than happy to oblige. Is it good for "Hot Rod's" bank account? Sure. Is it good for the wrestling industry? Not really.

In a way, it passes the bitterness buck along to the fans. Instead of allowing them to view the wrestling world as an enjoyable entity in which wrestlers square off against each other for honor and prestige (and their entertainment), it forces them to look at the seedy underbelly of sports entertainment. Rather than letting them maintain their happy outlook, he introduces them to a side of wrestling that they weren't meant to see. Why weren't they meant to see it? Because the wrestling industry is there for us as fans to enjoy. It's not up to them to feel responsible for the unfairness incurred by certain performers. While a promoter might have tried to cheat a wrestler out of a payday in 1982, that's something between the promoter and the wrestler. It's a personal problem that's made public knowledge. Why wash your dirty laundry in the community pool?

Then there's the issue of using these books to further personal grudges with other wrestlers. Reading through Ric Flair's book, certain things came to light. According to Ric, Mick Foley was a "glorified stuntman," and Bret Hart wasn't as big of a star as we all thought he was. The "Nature Boy's" comments were meant to undercut these men's legacies. "Slick" Ric stepped up to the plate and told his readers what a good wrestler was and wasn't.

The only problem is, that it isn't Ric Flair's job to tell us this. If you watched a movie last night, you know whether you felt it was good or bad. The lead actor can't tell you you're wrong. If you watched wrestling, you know who you felt was a good grappler and who wasn't. Sports entertainment is subjective. The favorites stars of its fans are based on personal opinions. One person might love Heidenreich

(I know, play along), while another hates him. It's just like any other form of entertainment. Not everyone likes the same thing. A wrestler furthering a personal agenda does not change that.

After thinking about all this, I called Stu back. Having reached an epiphany, I explained that in hindsight, a book about the office politics and grudges at our magazine would be a lousy idea. Why take away from the product we put out there by embittering our readers with trivial nonsense? It's best to just let them enjoy the magazines and all the hard work we do, rather than force-feed them any office politics or bad blood.

Readers don't need to hear who was a good or bad writer from me. Ultimately, the choice belongs to them. Tearing down others in my workplace would serve no other purpose than to boost my own ego and make myself look good in comparison. People see through that. At least I hope they do. At the end of the day, being juvenile and name-calling others that work hard to entertain our audience is counterproductive to business. It hurts the fans and those that strive to serve them.

Now I just wish someone could explain that to Ric Flair. □

YOU WOULDN'T KNOW it too look at her, but Smackdown's sexy Dawn Marie has been participating in wrestling for nearly a decade ... Born Dawn Marie Psaltis on November 3, 1970 ... Woodbridge, New Jersey, native made her debut by managing Tony Atlas during an independent card in the Garden State in January 1995 ... Soon began appearing as a manager in numerous other Northeastern independent promotions, guiding the likes of Jimmy Snuka, Buddy Landell, Tom Brandi, Devon Storm (Crowbar), Steve Corino, and Lance Diamond ("Such a great introduction into the business") ... Contacted by Buh Buh Ray Dudley for a tryout with ECW in the summer of 1998 ... Debuted as Lance Storm's valet on August 28 ... Calling herself Tammy Lynn Bytch, provided opposition for Tammy Lynn Sutch during Storm's feud with Sutch's boyfriend, Chris Candido ... Her presence immediately benefited Storm, who garnered an impressive win against Jerry Lynn at November to Remember ("Working with Lance was

so comfortable") ... Often got into hair-pulling, clothes-ripping catfights with Sutch, Francine, and Beulah McGillicutty—often over nothing at all ("Gotta give the fans what they want") ... Joined Storm and Justin Credible in The Impact Players, leading them to two ECW World tag team titles ("The chemistry was just perfect") ... Occasionally did color commentary for

ECW after Storm jumped to WCW in the summer of 2000 ... Returned to managing at the side of "Old School Hero" Steve Corino ... Was in Corino's corner when he won a "Double Jeopardy" match also featuring defending ECW World champion Lynn, Credible, and The Sandman to win the championship ... Started managing Diamond (Pat Kenney), and his

circuit, made her WWF debut in May 2002 on *Smackdown* as Vince McMahon's paralegal ... Also served as Stephanie McMahon's her personal secretary for a short time ... Entered into a feud with fellow Smackdown diva Torrie Wilson when she began dating Wilson's father, Al ... Accepted Al's marriage proposal on November 7, then married him—while they were

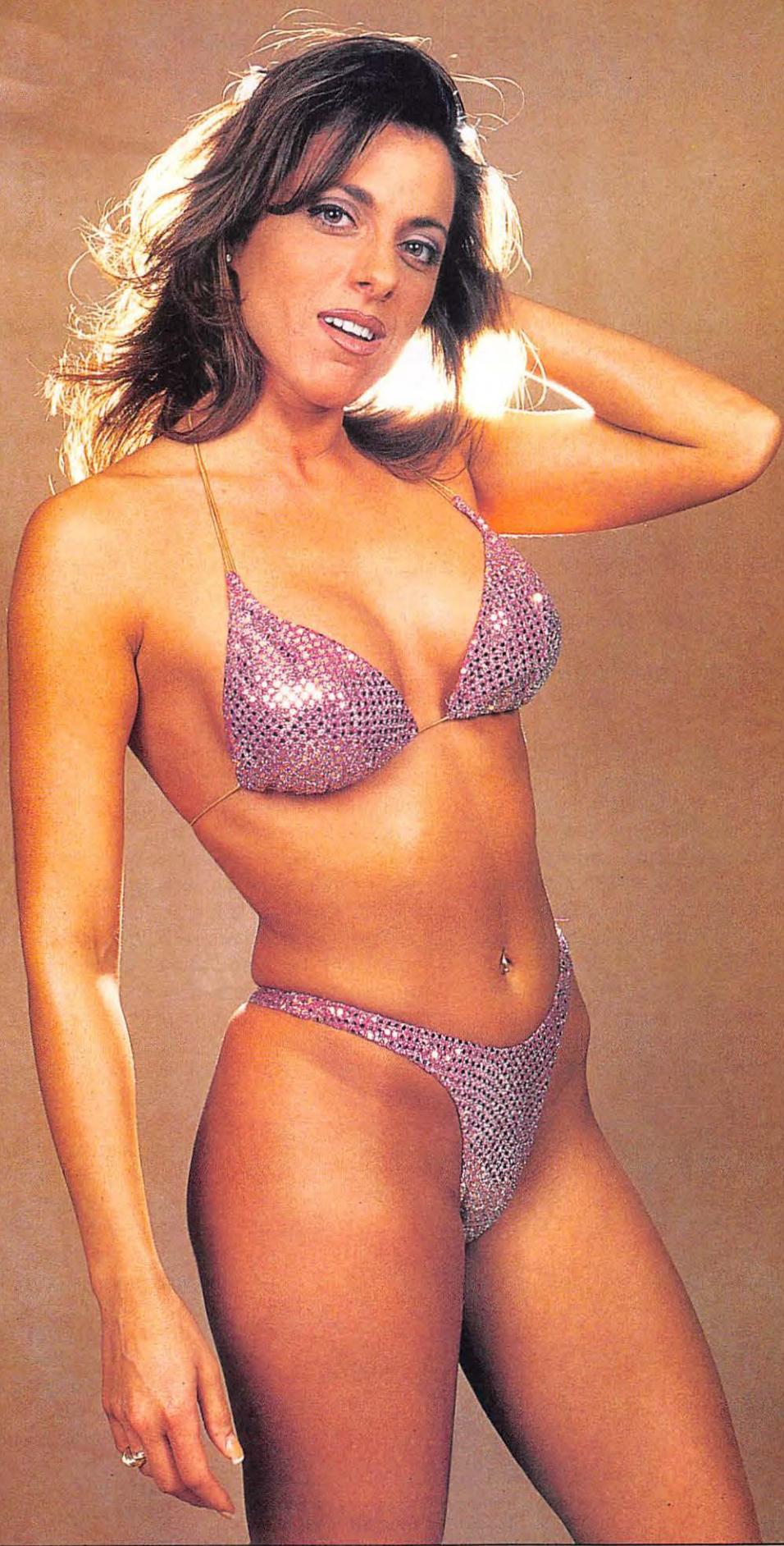
both in their underwear—live on *Smackdown* on January 2, 2003 ... The marriage would be short-lived, as Al went into a coma during their honeymoon and later "died" ... Lost a heated and strange grudge match to Wilson at the Royal Rumble ... Has actually lost dozens of matches to Torrie over the lat few years ... Suffered a horrendous beating at the hands of Shaniqua, prompting Nidia and Wilson to attack Shaniqua to try to stop the carnage ("I guess Torrie's not always so bad") ... Hired by Smackdown General Manager Paul Heyman as an administrative assistant, but lost that position after Heyman was drafted by Raw GM Eric Bischoff during the brand extension draft lottery ... Along with all the other Smack-



The Dawn Marie-Torrie Wilson matches are never mat classics, but they're fun to watch in their own way. Dawn hasn't had much success against her arch-rival, however.

partner, Johnny Swinger, at the Massacre on 34th Street pay-per-view on December 3 ("Can't ask for much more") ... Continued to manage Diamond and Swinger on the independent circuit after ECW folded in early-2001 ... Also competed on a semi-regular basis during this time ("It was time to take it to a new level") ... After more than a year on the independent

down divas, fired by GM Kurt Angle on July 20, 2004, but rehired by new GM Teddy Long one week later ... She's doing her best to break up the Charlie Haas-Jackie Gayda relationship now ... Always looking for ways to expand her career and show that she's one of the top divas of all-time ("I'm not done proving people wrong yet!") □



DAWN MARIE

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By Scott Teal

J.J. DILLON

To say J.J. Dillon had a successful career in professional wrestling would be an understatement. But young Jim Morrison never would have so much success if it weren't for some good advice and a few good breaks.

"I used to take the train to see the matches in Philadelphia," he recalled. "I sold programs so I could get in free and make a dollar or two. I also helped set up and tear the ring down." Morrison would have made an attempt to get into wrestling immediately if it weren't for the advice of George Bollas, The Zebra Kid.

"George told me, 'If you really want to wrestle, my suggestion is that you go to college. They can never take that away from you. Try out for the wrestling team and learn the basics of wrestling. If that's still what you want, go for it.' I went to college based on his advice and made the wrestling team."

He had his first pro match against Juan Rodriguez at Vineland (New Jersey) Speedway on July 11, 1962. "I don't really consider that to be my first pro match," he said, "but they paid me \$50, so I was regarded as a pro and couldn't wrestle in the amateurs any longer."

Morrison finished college two years later, but began a career with the WWWF as a referee in 1963. "One night, during a terrible snowstorm, the referees didn't show up. They look at me and asked, 'Hey, kid. Can you referee?' Whether I did before or not was beside the point, so they found a shirt and I refereed for that hour on TV. The only instructions I got was to 'work three sides of the ring and keep your butt out of the camera.' I worked as a ref for the next five years."

After spending two-plus years wrestling part-time, he moved from Ohio to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1971 and began a full-time career. During the next five years, he headlined shows in Charlotte, Nova Scotia, Amarillo, Japan, and Florida. His career took a twist when Archie Gouldie, The Mongolian Stomper, called him from Houston.

"Archie had seen me in the Maritimes. When he and his manager, Bearcat Wright, parted ways, Archie called and said, 'I need a manager. Have you ever thought about doing that?' I hadn't, but told

him that I didn't know why I couldn't. We met with Red Bastien in Dallas, who said, 'The Stomper with Jim Dillon. Jim Dillon. We need something else. What do you think about J.J. Dillon? It sounds like more of an executive-type name for a manager.' I've been called J.J. ever since then."

Among the wrestlers Dillon managed were Lonnie Mayne, Abdullah the Butcher, The Spoiler, Brute Bernard, John Studd, Ox Baker, Kendo Nagasaki, Don Kent, and Bob Heffernan. Then there were The Four Horsemen. Ric Flair, Tully Blanchard, Arn Anderson, and Ole Anderson formed the original group in the NWA in 1986. Later members included Lex Luger, Brian Pillman, Paul Roma, Sting, Sid Vicious, and Barry Windham.

"Arn Anderson came up with the idea for the Horsemen," said Dillon. "It wasn't something put together by design, but rather it took on a life of its own. When the Andersons were the tag champions, Tully was the U.S. champ, and Ric had the World title, we had all the belts. It was great for bragging rights."

In 1989, he went to work as Vince McMahon's head of talent relations, a position he held until 1996. He returned to WCW for a run as commissioner and finally left wrestling for good when WCW went out of business, going to work for Jerry Jarrett's construction company. Since then, he has worked in real estate in Atlanta and is currently a corrections officer for the Delaware Correctional Center.

Dillon has a passion for baseball and music and is working on his autobiography, tentatively titled *Wrestlers Are Like Seagulls*.

When asked if he missed the business, he said, "I now look at life through the eyes of my children. After being on the road for so many years, I spend as much time with them as I can. Wrestling was good to me and gave me the opportunity to see the world, but my world is now defined as that space that my family occupies."

(*Scott Teal publishes the newsletter "Whatever Happened To ...?" He can be reached at P.O. Box 2781, Hendersonville, TN 37077-2781. Web site: www.1wrestlinglegends.com.*)



J.J. Dillon the interfering manager gets set to blast an already-bloody Ron Bass with his shoe during a 1985 bout.



plain speaking

With Matt Brock

**Harder than nails,
veteran wrestling reporter
Matt Brock has logged more
miles covering wrestling
than any other journalist.
Every month Matt will travel
to the sport's hotbeds,
reporting everything he sees
without fear or favor**



CHRISTOPHER DANIELS & ELIX SKIPPER

ORLANDO, FL: Maybe it's time for TNA to go ahead and eliminate its tag team division. It's obvious the front office doesn't give a darn about it, and the current crop of teams looks like they're just going through the motions. Or maybe they're just so utterly confused about who their friends and enemies are that they're not sure what to do. ¶Bobby Rude and Eric Young put an end to the mix-and-match tag team era by winning the belts from James Storm (of America's Most Wanted) and Christopher Daniels (of Triple X). Storm and Daniels had won the belts from Chris Harris (of America's Most Wanted) and Elix Skipper (of Triple X), which meant tag partners were split up and paired with their rivals, and then pitted against their own teammates. ¶Before that, two youngsters by the names of Andy Douglas and Chase Stevens—or was that Andy Stevens and Chase Douglas?—held the belts, despite having never beaten a credible team prior to walking into a title shot with AMW. ¶It used to be that forming a tag team was a serious career move that required a commitment between partners. Like so many things in this sport, tag team wrestling has been cheapened to the point at which not even the fans seem to care as much as they

should anymore. It's like they know they shouldn't get attached to any team, as it will be broken up soon enough. That really is a shame, because Harris, Storm, Daniels, Skipper, and even Rude and Young are truly talented wrestlers. These are guys that TNA should be showcasing. Instead, they're mired in a murky tag division in which nothing seems to make any sense. ¶How about a gentleman's bet: Two-to-one that Mikey Batts and Jerrelle Clark are holding those NWA belts when you read this column. Same odds for Clark and Skipper.

SCIOTA, PA: I knew the old editor-in-chief Dave Lenker was up to no good when he started doling out the compliments. "Matt, that diet you're on looks like it's working wonders," he said with all the sincerity of a used car salesman on his first day on the job. "You look like a man half your age." Which is still plenty old enough to know when someone is setting me up for a garbage assignment. Right away, I figured Lenker was putting me on a plane to cover WWE's big European tour. I started to mentally count my frequent flyer miles. ¶"We want you to cover the WXW Women's Elite 8 Tournament in Sciota," Lenker said. Under normal circumstances, I have about as much use for women's wrestling as I do for a snowboard, which is to say none at all. But it beats flying halfway around the world and living out of a suitcase for nine days. Everything's relative, I guess. ¶Turns out the Women's Elite 8 Tourney was much better than I thought it'd be. As much as I think wrestling and women don't mix (and I know I'm not going to win that argument, so don't even bother), it was refreshing to see eight women who are

actually serious about wrestling and not trying to become the next WWE diva. ¶ I was mighty impressed with tournament winner Alere Little Feather, whose little war dance is a heck of a lot easier on the eyes than Chief Jay Strongbow's ever was. She's also a damn good technical wrestler with a heck of an armbar. Allison Danger and finalist Mercedes Martinez were also impressive. You know, if this is the kind of women's wrestling we get to see more often, I might be finally willing to give the ladies a chance. Maybe.

PHILADELPHIA, PA: Going back to the subject of tag teams, you're not going to find many better than The Midnight Express, no matter which version of the team you're talking about. Jim Cornette, "Sweet" Stan Lane, "Beautiful" Bobby Eaton, and "Lover Boy" Dennis Condrey re-united for a special appearance at a Ring of Honor card here at the National Guard Armory. A lot of the fans here were probably about eight years old when the Midnights were on top of the NWA, but those fans sure remembered "The Louisville Lip" and his boys, as they gave them a hero's welcome. ¶ Prince Nana soon came out, determined to put an end to the lovefest, and he brought out The Rock 'n' Roll Express' Rick Morton, who traded barbs with Cornette. For the first time I can remember, Morton was the clear-cut bad guy, and



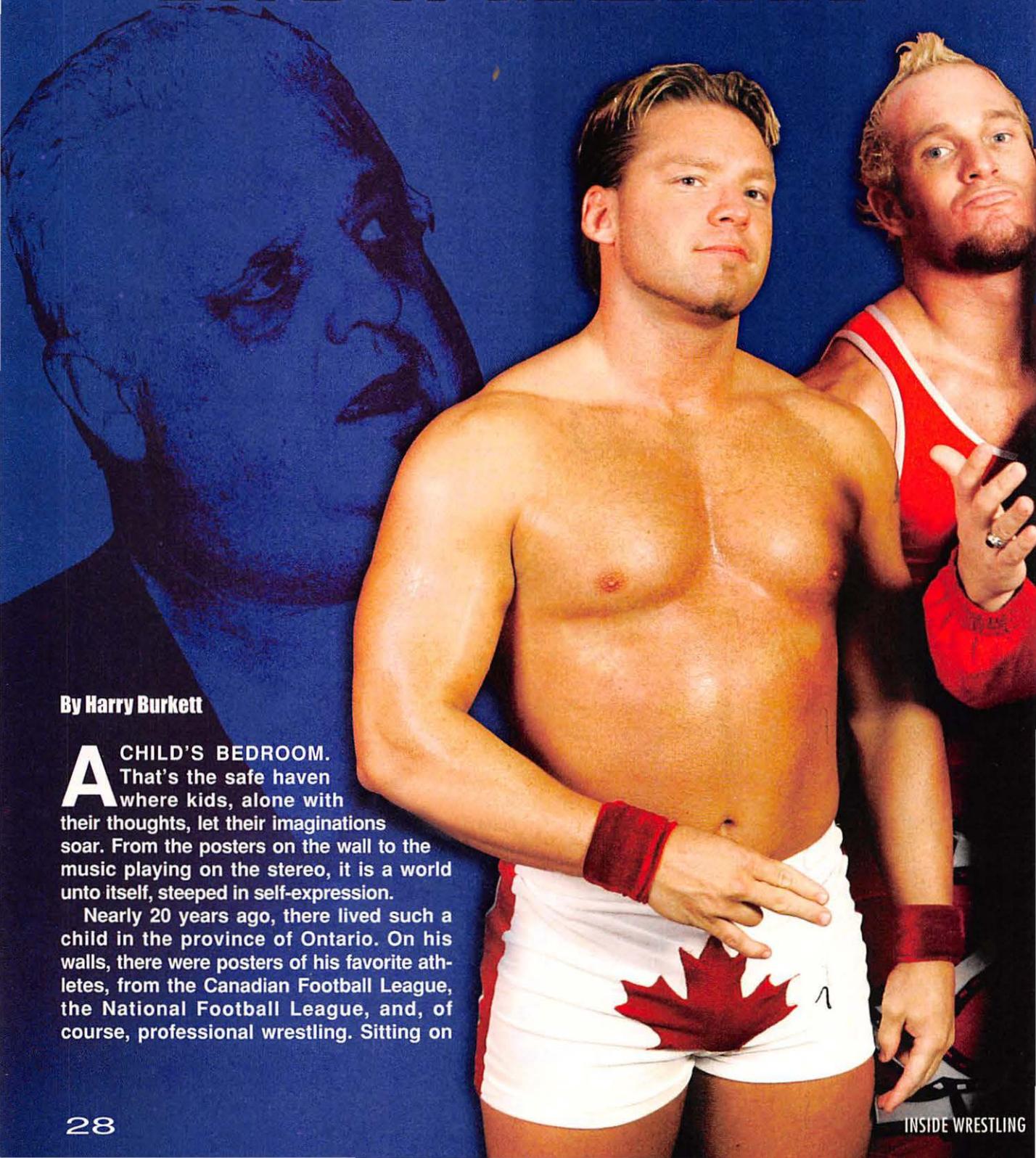
DENNIS CONDREY, JIM CORNETTE, & BOBBY EATON (1986)

those Midnight Express boys were the solid fan favorites. ¶ This little showdown brought out Nana's Embassy, who attacked the Express, only to be sent scurrying by Lane's educated feet, Cornette's tennis racket, Eaton's lefts, and Condrey's rights. ¶ "What can I say, Brock," a smiling Cornette said to me later that night. "Ricky Morton—and these Philadelphia fans—bring out the devil in us." Wonder if Andy Douglas and Chase Stevens will be getting standing ovations somewhere 20 years from now.

WHEATFIELD, NY: Swung up near Niagara Falls to take my chances at the Seneca Niagara Casino and take in another Empire State Wrestling card. Let's just say I had a much better time at the ESW show than I did at the casino. The All-Knighters—Joey Knight, Kevin Grace, and "The Sexy Monkey" Robin Knightwing—have won tag titles all over the East Coast and in the Midwest, and fans just can't get enough

of their wacky entrances and dance routines. ¶ Tonight, Knightwing, who regularly tours the United Kingdom and trained in the Hart family Dungeon in Calgary, got a big singles match against Jonny Puma, the reigning ESW champion. You'd have a hard time finding a bigger contrast in styles than the sculpted Puma and—well, just to be polite, let's say the husky Knightwing. ¶ Knightwing came damn close to coming away with the title, but Puma managed to hit his Jonny-on-the-spot finisher to steal the win. ¶ "That fat, sweaty clown had no business being in the ring with a gorgeous specimen of masculinity like me," Puma told me after the match. But his bravado wasn't nearly as convincing as he wanted it to be. Beating an experienced competitor like Knightwing was a major coup for Puma, even if he scraped out that win by the skin of his teeth. One other thing about Niagara Falls: I don't care what the books say—hit on 16 when you're at the blackjack table. □

HOW A 20-YEAR-OLD **DUSTY "SNUB"** TURNED **SCOTT D'AMORE** INTO A MADMAN!



By Harry Burkett

A CHILD'S BEDROOM. That's the safe haven where kids, alone with their thoughts, let their imaginations soar. From the posters on the wall to the music playing on the stereo, it is a world unto itself, steeped in self-expression.

Nearly 20 years ago, there lived such a child in the province of Ontario. On his walls, there were posters of his favorite athletes, from the Canadian Football League, the National Football League, and, of course, professional wrestling. Sitting on

Dusty Rhodes was a hero to Scott D'Amore at one time. That's hard to believe, considering how D'Amore is trying to destroy "The American Dream" in TNA today. And it all started because of a fan letter

Photos by Vern Verna



Scott D'Amore posed with (from left to right) Team Canada members Johnny Devine, Eric Young, Bobby Rude, and Petey Williams. It's a wonder he hasn't sent all of them after Dusty Rhodes yet!



D'Amore waited a long, long time to get his hands on Rhodes, although we think his version of what happened with Rhodes so many years ago is a bit, shall we say, skewed.

his dresser were the trophies he had earned as a young athlete himself. The 12-year-old desperately wanted to be just like those bedroom wall heroes, frozen in time, who seemed to be posing and smiling just for him.

Among those heroes was a man whose smile seemed broader than the rest, the teeth a little whiter, and the twinkle in his eye was vibrant and alive on that inanimate piece of paper. It was "The American Dream" Dusty Rhodes. Successful, flamboyant, and charismatic, the former NWA World champion represented everything the young boy wanted to be. Rhodes didn't possess a Charles Atlas physique, either. Self-conscious and insecure like virtually everyone else his age, the young boy thought, *If Dusty can make it, maybe I can make it, too.*

Finally, the young boy had to reach out to Dusty, just to make him aware of his existence. He poured his heart and soul into a letter. He told Dusty why he liked him so much, cited his favorite matches, and wished him luck against The Four Horsemen. Most importantly, he informed Dusty that his family was planning to go on a winter vacation to Florida in about three months. He had talked his parents into stopping in Greenville, South Carolina, where Dusty

was scheduled to headline an NWA show. He asked to meet Dusty before the show and get his autograph.

As a P.S. at the end of the letter, the young boy wrote, "You mean more to me than anything."

After enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope, he mailed the letter to Dusty's fan club in Charlotte, North Carolina. Within a week, the young boy was rushing to the mailbox every single day to see if Dusty had sent a reply. The ritual continued for five weeks until, finally, his self-addressed stamped envelope came in the mail. Inside, a postcard was folded in half. On the front, there was a black and white photo of Dusty holding the NWA World title belt, circa 1981. On the back, there was some barely legible scrawling: "Come on down. Be glad to see

you. Sign autograph for you—Dream."

Finally, November came. Although the young boy was the only diehard wrestling fan in the household, the family made a stop in Greenville, South Carolina, just in time for the show. Everyone in the car had warned him not to get his hopes up. Dusty was a busy man, and probably wouldn't have time for him. But the boy stubbornly resisted, saying Dusty was expecting him. Besides, Dusty was more than a hero now. He was a close personal friend.

When they arrived at the Greenville Coliseum, the boy was determined to prove his relatives wrong. In fact, he demanded to handle the situation himself. With the rest of his family a few feet behind him, the boy walked to the back of the arena and said he was supposed to meet Dusty. "Don't you think everybody wants to meet the rasslers?" asked a gruff security guard. "If I let you in, I've got to let everybody else in, too."

The boy insisted on walking around the entire Greensboro Coliseum twice, hoping against hope to catch his idol's attention. It was almost bell time. Inside the Coliseum, the boy explained his plight to the ticket lady. "Sorry, but I can't get Dusty because I'm sure he's getting ready for his match," she



D'Amore probably liked his chances of beating Rhodes in 2004 a lot better than he would have in 1994 ... or even 1999. He learned the hard way that even decades past his prime, "The American Dream" could still dominate him (above and below).



replied. "Now, if you had a letter or something, maybe I could help you."

Of course, that black and white postcard was sitting in a frame next to a picture of Angelo Mosca ... back in his bedroom in Ontario.

He tried to be a brave little boy, but he could barely fight back the tears. Ordinarily, seeing an NWA show in person would have been a fantasy. But he had an empty feeling in his stomach the whole time, and when Dusty came out for the main event, the sight of his hero upset him even more. The bond was broken. Dusty had gone back on his word.

Scott D'Amore would make Dusty Rhodes pay.

When D'Amore turned 18, he became a pro wrestler. Competing primarily in Ontario and Michigan, D'Amore never crossed paths with his fallen hero. He went on to wrestle in dark matches for the WWF and even had a stint in WCW, but he still never met Rhodes. But it's not as if D'Amore was really looking for him. D'Amore didn't care whether he ever

laid eyes on Rhodes again.

That all changed in 2002. D'Amore became a talent agent for TNA and, as an executive, it was impossible for him to completely avoid Rhodes when Jeff Jarrett talked the legend into making regular appearances. D'Amore kept their conversations short and never mentioned how Dusty had dissed him two decades earlier.

"I always wondered what the deal was with Scott and Dusty," said Shane Douglas, currently a backstage interviewer for *Impact*. "Usually, Scott's this big, boisterous guy, and around Dusty, he'd become quiet all of a sudden. I figured it was because Dusty's a legend and Scott felt humbled around him. I didn't realize Scott has these childhood scars from Dusty not giving him an autograph. I hope he's seeing a shrink for this."

In his capacity as a TNA official, D'Amore didn't have any problems with Rhodes in the beginning. But all of D'Amore's suppressed feelings came bubbling up to the surface when Rhodes began to interfere with his on-air role. "The Dream" became an outspoken critic of Team Canada and its leader, D'Amore, in particular. Rhodes made D'Amore out to be a non-athletic loser, a coward, and a loudmouth. He even questioned why Team Canada bothered to have him around. As a member of the NWA Championship Committee and a frequent match judge for *Impact*, Rhodes posed a serious threat to Team Canada—and

A BUMBLING MANAGER? There's More To D'Amore Than You Think!

We know what you think of Scott D'Amore. You see him take cheap shots against Team Canada's opponents with his trusty flagpole. You see him run away from the ring at the first sight of trouble. You think he's just an overweight, sleazy, lazy manager from the same tradition as Paul Bearer, Jim Cornette, Sir Oliver Humperdink, and George "Cry-baby" Cannon, right?

You couldn't be more wrong. Unlike those windbags, D'Amore actually has an accomplished athletic background and was a successful wrestler in his own right. In fact, he has trained some of Canada's greatest wrestlers at his school in Windsor, Ontario, including Chris Sabin, Petey Williams, Johnny Devine, and Alex Shelley. He's more than an inspirational leader to Team Canada. He's their trainer and mentor. Forget his 265-pound frame. The 5'11" D'Amore was a streamlined 232 pounds at the start of his career.

Twelve years ago, D'Amore was trained by "Irish" Mickey Doyle and quickly became one of the brightest stars in Motor City Wrestling. At only 19 years of age, D'Amore defeated future *Tough Enough* trainer Al Snow in a 30-minute "Ironman" match. Within a few years, D'Amore frequently wrestled at WCW television tapings and house shows, and even scored a win over future world champion Dallas Page.

D'Amore opened a training school in Windsor, Ontario, and became the promoter for Border City Wrestling, based in the same



To Rhodes, the match with the leader of Team Canada was just another in a long history of grudge matches he has had—and won. He didn't look too concerned that he would lose. To D'Amore, it meant so much more.

took joy in embarrassing D'Amore.

Deep inside, D'Amore was seething. As far as he was concerned, Rhodes had already humiliated him when he was only 12. It didn't take long for D'Amore to remember how he felt on that trip from Greenville to Orlando nearly 20 years earlier. Rhodes would not only pay for berating Team Canada. He would pay for everything.

"Whenever Rhodes down me or Team Canada, you know what I'm thinking?" retorted D'Amore. "I'm thinking this: *Who the hell do you think you are?* You're walking around with your big cowboy hat, with your chest poked out like a rooster, like you're better than everybody else? You're acting like you're better than *me*? Well, at least I'm not the kind of miserable human being who would let a 12-year-old kid ride from Ontario to South Carolina just to see his idol without even giving him the time of day! Rhodes is gonna pay for what he's doing to Team Canada right now—and he's gonna pay for what he did to me 20 years ago!"

Team Canada knows how important this vendetta is to D'Amore. Like the family who stood a few feet behind while D'Amore tried in vain to meet his hero Petey Williams, Eric Young, Bobby Rude, and Johnny Devine are keeping a respectful distance from this one, too. While they have been involved in tag team and six-man tag team matches involving D'Amore and Rhodes, they know deep down that D'Amore wants to handle this on his own.

In a match that was 20 years in the making, D'Amore finally got his chance against Rhodes on September 8 in Nashville, the site of TNA's final Wednesday night pay-per-view. Unfortunately for D'Amore, the match didn't go very well. D'Amore thought he had the advantage because another one of Rhodes' rivals, Director of Authority Vince Russo

region. In addition to some under-card appearances in the WWF, D'Amore often went on tours throughout Canada, the U.S., Europe, and Japan. A long-reign-

ing BCW Can-Am champion, D'Amore became known for his technical, submission-based style. In the mid-1990s, he was half of a hockey-playing tag team called Gross Misconduct, which no doubt inspired today's Ballard Brothers.

Yet even that wasn't enough for the versatile D'Amore. By the late-1990s, he was splitting time between his wrestling career and pursuing a degree at the University of Windsor,

where he became a football standout. When D'Amore returned to full-time competition, he gained victories over some of wrestling's biggest names, including Edge, Christian, King Kong Bundy, 2 Cold Scorpio, Jim Neidhart, and Chris "Tatanka" Chavis. His 25-minute hardcore match against Sabu was the most violent in BCW history. In 1998, an online survey ranked D'Amore as Canada's top independent star.

So, you think D'Amore is an out-of-shape wannabe? Think again.

—Harry Burkett



D'Amore crossfaces Johnny Swinger (1998)

was the special referee for the bout.

Because the 30-year-old D'Amore had spent the past few years as the promoter of Border City Wrestling, a talent agent for TNA, and a manager for Team Canada, he couldn't even muster much of a physical advantage over the 58-year-old Rhodes. That's quite a statement, considering Russo was a major distraction.

Rhodes gave Russo the bionic elbow and got into a yelling match with him. Meanwhile, D'Amore couldn't match Rhodes punch-for-punch, and soon found himself flat on his back. Rhodes finished him off with a flying elbow smash and pinned him after six minutes of slow-motion action.

When Russo offered Rhodes a handshake—a sign of truce—after the match, Team Canada attacked the "Dream" mercilessly until 3 Live Kru finally came to the rescue. But that was of small consolation to D'Amore, who sat on the mat battered and beaten—and utterly humiliated by Rhodes for the second time in 20 years.

And what about Rhodes? Was he aware of the backstory concerning D'Amore's vendetta? Not surprisingly, he didn't remember the letter from young Scott.

"If I'd known that little boy would turn out to be such a fool, I wouldn't have just sent him a postcard—I would've sent the little punk some certified hate mail," said Rhodes. "I

want to get his autograph so I can scare some rats out of my barn. He needs to get real and grow up!"

D'Amore had better tread carefully. He might have more than Rhodes to worry about. Somewhere out there, in a bedroom far away, there might be a disgruntled youngster plotting his 20-year revenge. □



Maybe D'Amore should have stuck with a ground attack (above). When he took to the air, well, it was all over for him pretty quickly (left).

Paul London

"I'd quit before I'd wrestle in fear"

PRIOR TO DEBUTING for Smackdown, Paul London was a star of the independent circuit. Fans were so enthralled with him that they began snapping up DVDs of his Ring of Honor performances, called for him to become a more integral part of TNA, and trekked to Delaware to see him compete in—and eventually win—the 2003 Super 8.

Then, in the summer of 2003, he signed a developmental deal with WWE. By the fall, he was competing on Smackdown shows ...

... and struggling to retain the name recognition that he fought so hard to earn on the independent circuit.

London's adjustment to WWE was difficult. His opponents became the toughest of his career, the time restraints on his matches were much more stringent than he was used to, and he was suddenly much smaller than almost everyone around him. To make things worse, when Brian "Spanky" Kendrick left in January 2004 to pursue a career in Japan, London was suddenly without a regular tag team partner.

Enter Billy Kidman.

After parting with Spanky, teaming with Kidman seemed like a no-brainer. They had similar looks and styles, and London was sure to gain a lot of knowledge while wrestling at Kidman's side. Together, they upset The Dudley Boyz in July 2004 to win the Smackdown tag team championship. Though they would lose the belts to Kenzo Suzuki and Rene Dupree just

two months later, they had proven themselves.

Then came Kidman's botched shooting star press on Chavo Guerrero Jr., which resulted in Guerrero suffering a concussion. Afterward, Kidman became hesitant in the ring and outright refused to use the maneuver. London didn't understand. He pressed Kidman to regain his old form. Kidman resisted, and then during a match against Suzuki and Du-

"I don't hate Chavo Guerrero, and neither does Billy. The entire locker room was shaken up when Billy hit him with the shooting star. But Chavo pulled through it, and Billy didn't. He let that maneuver haunt him so much that he became scared to do anything in the ring."

pree, Kidman walked out on his partner. A match between them was signed for No Mercy. During that showdown, London attempted a shooting star press, but Kidman blocked it. Later, Kidman hit a shooting star press of his own—and then he hit a second one as London was being carted out of the ring by EMTs.

Senior Writer Will Welsh recently sat down with London to discuss Kidman, the shooting star press, and what he hopes to accomplish now that he appears to be a singles wrestler again.

Q: Paul, first of all, how are you feeling?

A: Well, my ribs are still sore, my nose is a mess, and there was some internal damage, which was why I was coughing up blood at the pay-per-view, but now I'm okay. I mean, you're always going to carry around some bumps and bruises. It's part of what comes with being a wrestler.

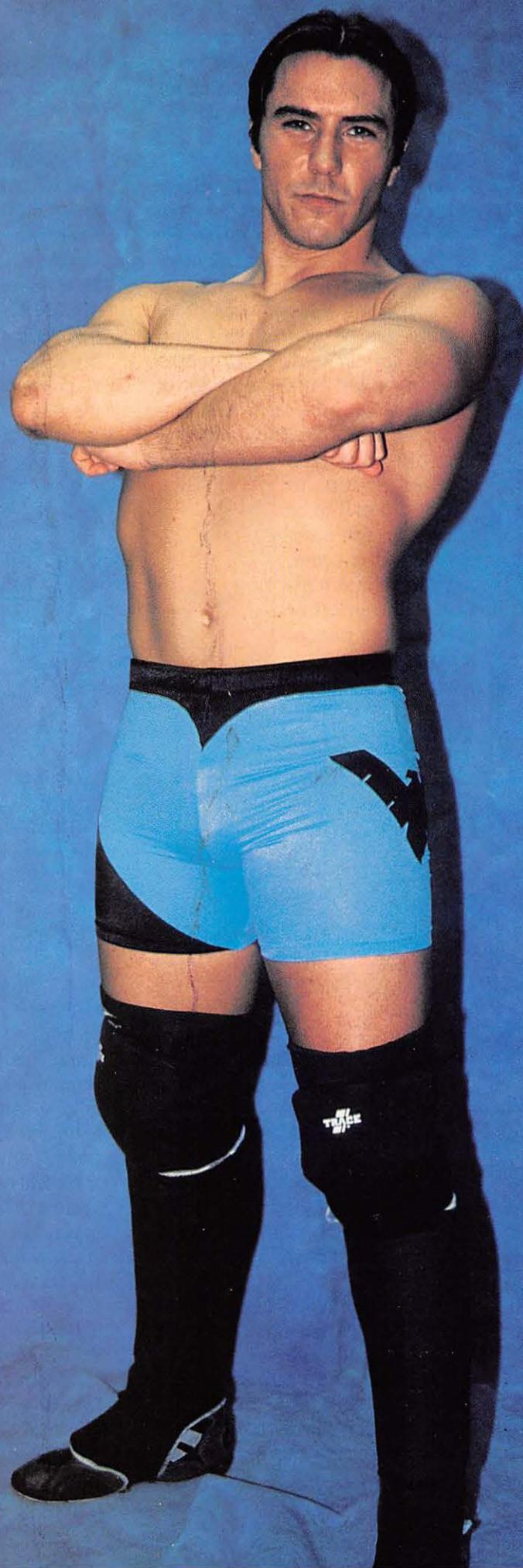
Q: How do you deal with that aspect of the sport? It's obviously something you have to face down time and time again.

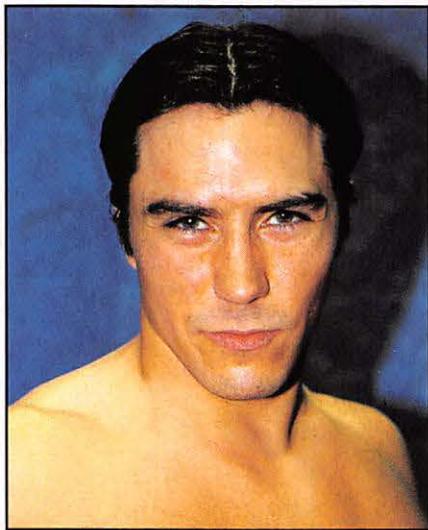
A: Absolutely. Wrestling is a dangerous sport, and people get hurt all the time. In many ways, injuries are what define us—but injuries also help to tell us who we are and how much we want to be in the sport.

Q: What do you mean?

A: A lot of fans talk about how they can tell when a wrestler really "wants it." They'll point to his physique, his interviews, or maybe even his win-loss record—but that's because they've never wrestled before. See, the true measure of a wrestler's heart is how quickly he comes back from injury—how much he'll risk by entering that ring again and challenging himself to push his body to its limits. It's something most people don't see.

Q: So you're saying that when a wrestler decides to return from an injury, it's because he's more





"I don't know if I'll ever be able to forgive [Kidman] for putting me in the hospital. It was completely unnecessary. He won the match. What was trying to cause me more harm meant to prove?"



mentally ready than physically ready?

A: I think so. Ask anyone back here. Even if the body isn't 100 percent ready to go, the mind can help overcome that. The mind can convince the body that it's ready—and because it's the mind that's doing the convincing, the body somehow manages. There's a flip side to this argument too. Even if the body is in the best shape it has ever been in, if the mind isn't

ready or prepared to go out to the ring and wrestle, the body will fail. Basically, in order for the body to function properly, the body needs the mind, and the mind needs the body.

Q: So is that where your beef with Billy Kidman stems from? That even though he was physically able to wrestle, he wasn't mentally ready?

A: Yeah, that was the problem. Billy has been around a long time, longer than most people even realize. He's seen a lot of people get injured. When you wrestle for a living, that's part of the game. That's what we do. In fact, if you look at how we win most of our matches, you see that hurting one another is a huge part of wrestling. If a wrestler wins a match by submis-

he'll be too weak to pull his shoulders off the mat during the count. This isn't amateur wrestling, where they win with points and by positioning an opponent's shoulders to the mat for a second. In professional wrestling, we're talking three seconds! That's a long time. More than likely, if you've been able to pin your opponent's shoulders to the mat for three seconds, it's because you've hurt him in some shape or form.

Q: I'll give you those points. But was the situation with Billy Kidman different? After all, there are different



An alliance between Kidman, Paul London, and Rey Misterio Jr. had potential (left), but it lasted only a few weeks. Many thought London and Kidman (above) were a promising modern version of The Rockers. So much for that talk!

sion, it's because he's tweaked his opponent's arm, pulled on his leg, or wrenched his back to such a degree that the opponent can no longer take the pain.

Q: That's sadistic when you say it that way.

A: It's the truth. When we pin someone, we're usually going for the pinfall because we believe we've knocked our opponent out for at least three seconds ... that he won't hear the referee's hand slapping the mat or that

levels of hurt. Kidman hit Chavo Guerrero with his shooting star press, and when he did, he also drove his knee into Guerrero's temple, knocking Guerrero out cold. Guerrero didn't move for a few minutes afterward, and EMTs had to carry him out of the ring on a stretcher. Is inflicting that kind of injury the kind of thing that's easy to wave off?

A: As a wrestler, it almost has to be. I'd quit before I'd wrestle in fear. At that time, I knew why Billy was worried about Chavo's health. I was too. I don't hate Chavo Guerrero, and neither does Billy. The entire locker room was shaken up when Billy hit him with the shooting



We've never seen London hesitate before going for a shooting star press, and that's because he won't. If he's afraid, there's a far greater likelihood of something bad happening.

star. But Chavo pulled through it, and Billy didn't. He let that maneuver haunt him so much that he became scared to do anything in the ring.

Q: Until he wrestled you at No Mercy, anyway.

A: Yeah, I guess so.

Q: Were you surprised at Kidman's actions during and after that match?

A: Surprised? No. That was the kind of match that I wanted Billy to wrestle when we were still together! That's what he needed to do. He needed to go to the top rope and hit the shooting star press. That way, he could get those demons out of his system, forget what happened to Chavo, and move on. Unfortunately, he waited to do that until our match against each other. That's what I don't get.

Q: But what about the second shooting star press he hit on you as you were being taken off on a stretcher? What is your reaction to that?

A: That ... that was Billy at his worst. I don't know if I'll ever be able to forgive him for putting me in the hospital. It was completely unnecessary. He won the match. What was try-

ing to cause me more harm meant to prove?

Q: Well, he has talked about how you're to blame for your injuries. He's also said that the fans are to blame for your injuries too, because it was their bloodthirstiness that forced him to use the maneuver against you.

A: That's a bunch of bull. The fans like the shooting star press because it's a cool maneuver, and they've gotten used to Billy using it throughout his career. That's why they want to see him use it—not because it hurts people.

Q: Is that why you tried to use it during the match? A lot of people think that's where you went wrong, by trying to show Kidman up.

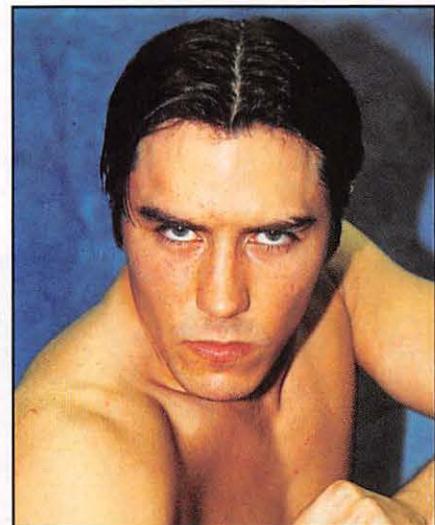
A: Yeah, I'd say that going for the shooting star press was a poor strategic maneuver. It woke Billy up. But that move is part of my arsenal too. Always has been.

Q: But why did you use it in that match?

A: Just to show Billy that I could—and that I could use it safely. Him getting his knees up to block it, though ... that I wasn't ready for.

Q: Is it a safe maneuver? We've seen it injure people over the years, and the inherent risk to the wrestler performing the maneuver is incredibly high. Brock Lesnar nearly killed himself using that maneuver at WrestleMania XIX. Highlights of him hitting the mat headfirst still give people chills.

A: It does carry a greater risk than, say, a dropkick. I agree. But wide receivers who go across the middle in football carry a greater risk of injury than those who stay to the sidelines. Are NFL owners calling for a rule that prevents receivers from going across the middle? No, they aren't. And you want to know why? It's because they understand the inherent risk involved. I still say the shooting star press is a safe maneuver—as



"I wouldn't mind becoming the cruiserweight champion. That's a pretty realistic goal. I've also thought about stepping up and challenging for the U.S. title too. I don't want to limit myself."

long as it's executed properly.

Q: What about your future? Most of the time you've been on the WWE roster it's been as part of a tag team. Now you're on your own again. Do you have any particular goals in mind?

A: I wouldn't mind becoming the cruiserweight champion. That's a pretty realistic goal. I've also thought about stepping up and challenging for the U.S. title too. I don't want to limit myself, you know? The second you do that is the second that you start doubting yourself. And when you start doubting yourself, you become less effective in the ring. That's when injuries happen. The way I figure it, I'll continue to wrestle whoever WWE puts in front of me. If I give those matches my best, I'm sure that I'll come out on top more often than not.

Q: And if you have to wrestle Kidman again?

A: I look forward to that. And I'll make sure I get my knees up. □

EDGE OF



INSANITY!

Has He Squashed His Own Championship Dreams?

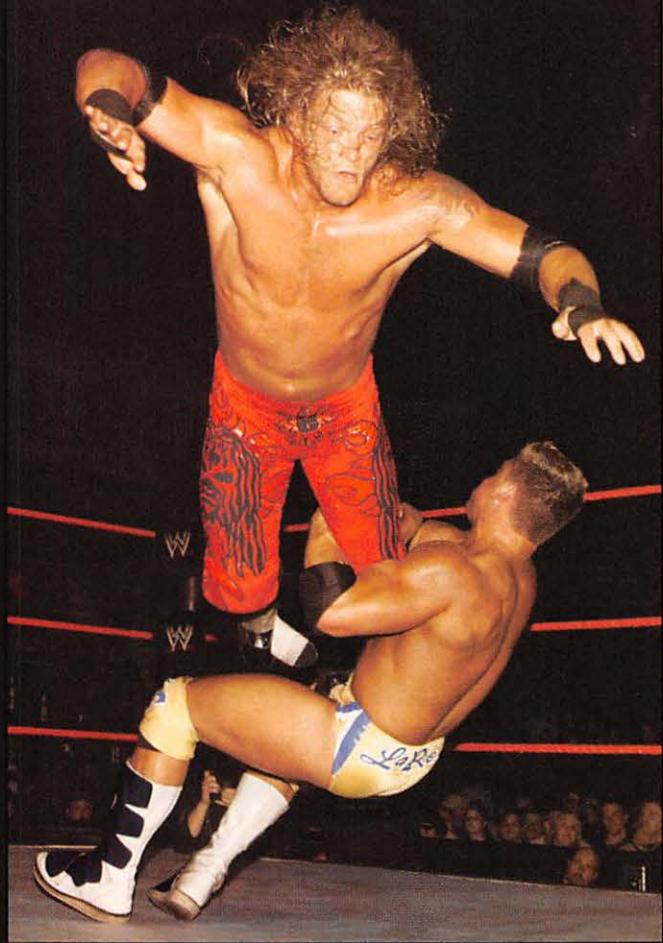
His frustration was understandable. Edge had been denied the Raw title match he felt he earned, this time by WWE fans. Spearing Shawn Michaels and ruining his chances of winning the gold made him feel good for the moment. But did he realize what the implications would be?



Edge made it clear just where he stood when he speared Shawn Michaels and screwed him out of a chance to win the Raw title at Taboo Tuesday. He's out for himself only now. We doubt he thought this decision through.

By Will Welsh

EDGE SAT ALONE at Milwaukee's General Mitchell International Airport the morning after Taboo Tuesday. Chris Benoit, his reluctant tag team partner and co-Raw tag team champion, sat more than a few gates over. The two men hadn't spoken since Edge walked out on Benoit during their match against La Resistance, forcing Benoit to wres-



Even when he was beating up Sylvan Grenier in the Raw tag title match at Taboo Tuesday, his heart wasn't in it (below). Once Grenier got the best of him (above), well, he wasn't going to stick around much longer.



tie the match one-on-two. It was hard to tell if either man knew that the other was sitting so close, but it seemed doubtful. Benoit was fast asleep, having uncomfortably sprawled out across a row of chairs. Edge was awake, but the big gray hood pulled over his eyes obscured his vision.

If either man had known that the other was so close, it's hard to believe that they would have remained so peaceful and calm.

Much farther away from Edge was Shawn Michaels. HBK chose to stay at his hotel in order to catch a later flight. His body needed the rest, especially considering that he had wrestled Triple-H the night before with a torn meniscus. His ribs were still sore from the spear with which Edge had blasted him to help Triple-H secure his victory. As he lay in bed, wincing at even the slightest of movements, he had to be swearing to himself that he'd make Edge pay for the transgression.

Nearer to Edge, only one gate over, was Raw champion Triple-H, fresh off his successful title defense against Michaels. Next to him sat Batista, who, like Edge, also played a role in Helmsley's victory.

Oddly enough, Helmsley's mentor, Ric Flair, was nowhere to be found.

Batista looked over at Edge, seemingly brooding for no apparent reason, and the big man chuckled. Then he pointed out Edge to Triple-H, who couldn't help but break into a wry grin. The Raw champion got out of his seat and strolled over to where Edge was sitting. He put out his hand. Edge looked at it, thought for a second or two, and let Helmsley's hand fall.

"It should've been me and you know it," Edge mumbled.

"Yeah, kid, whatever," Helmsley coughed as he walked back to his seat. He said something under his breath to Batista, and then the two men got up and walked into a nearby restaurant, letting Edge wallow in his self-created misery.

Edge is never in an okay mood, because his personality won't allow it. He's either riding high as a wisecracking, joke-making prankster, or he's in the gutter as a brooding mess. There is precious little in-between—which is unfortunate, because if there is a wrestler who has ever needed to find some kind of middle ground in his personal psyche, it's Edge. When he's up, he's too happy-go-lucky to be concerned with title shots or main-eventing. When he's down, he's too miserable to care about darn near anything except his own perceived persecution. Both personalities lead him to make hasty decisions that leave his wrestling career wanting.

In the weeks leading up to Taboo Tuesday, Edge was in one of his famous funks. He was blaming the world for his own failures, such as his inability to become a full-time top-of-the-card star or even earn a Raw title shot or two. He blamed the

Why Edge Must Defeat Orton ... Again!

Think back to early-2004, back when Edge was just returning from a year-long leave of absence following neck surgery. WWE had high hopes for the Canadian to shed his reputation as a tag team specialist and blossom into a regular member of Raw's main event rotation. The company was depending on him to become one of the brand's future stars, and it needed him to instantly capture momentum.

However, Edge's ascent to the top tier wasn't instantaneous. Instead, it was slow and steady, and a short run with Chris Benoit as Raw tag team champion put his progress on hold.

Edge didn't need another run as tag team champion. He had had enough of those, and he was looking for something bigger.

Enter Randy Orton. Orton, at the time a willing member of Evolution, was in the midst of an impressive streak as Intercontinental champion—and he knew it. The boastful third-generation superstar began calling himself one of the greatest Intercontinental champions in the history of the sport, and more than a few people believed him. Edge knew that if he wanted to stand out, knocking off Orton and taking his title would be an

ideal place to start. So, at Vengeance 2004, Edge did just that. He took advantage of an exposed turnbuckle by whipping Orton into it and then spearing him for the one-two-three, ending Orton's seven-month run as I-C champion.

Less than two months later, Raw General Manager Eric Bischoff stripped Edge of the championship because Edge had suffered an abductor muscle tear, an injury that would have kept him from defending the title for more than 30 days. But the title wasn't the only thing that Bischoff stripped from Edge. When Bischoff declared the title vacant, he also stripped Edge of all his momentum. By the time Edge returned to action, everyone had forgotten how he had halted Orton's I-C title reign—which is why if Edge hopes to get into the main event mix, he needs to pick another fight with Orton and show the world that he's the better wrestler.

He needs to show the world that he—not Orton—is Raw's future.

Why Orton? Well, in the time since Edge defeated the self-proclaimed "Legend Killer" for the I-C title, Orton has gone on to become the youngest Raw champion ever. He's established himself as one of



This feud shouldn't be over!

the top two or three players on the Raw roster. He's also become the unofficial leader of the next generation of great wrestlers and appears to be in line for a shot at "The Game" at WrestleMania 21. Edge, however, has already beaten him—and beaten him soundly with gold on the line.

If Edge wants to re-establish his top tier credentials, he needs to do it now with a victory—or, better yet, a series of victories—over Orton. Only then will he be ready for a run at Raw gold, no matter who is holding it.

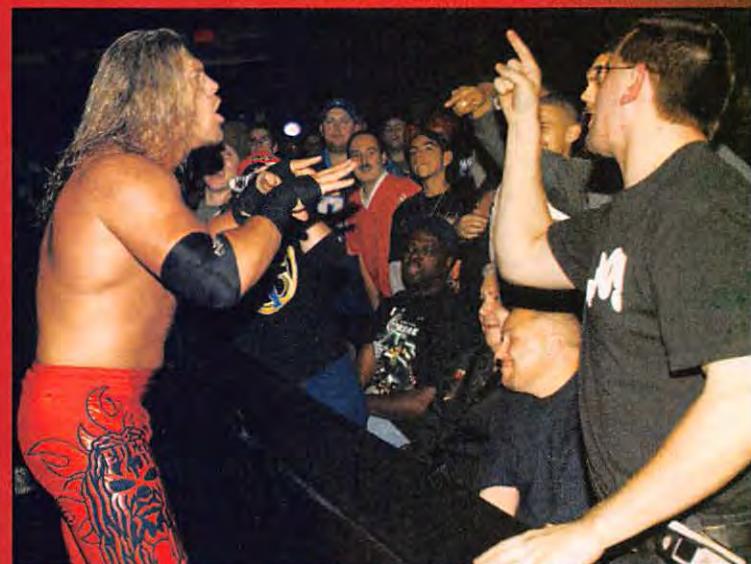
—Will Welsh

presence of Shawn Michaels and Chris Benoit for holding him back and blamed the fans for turning their backs on him.

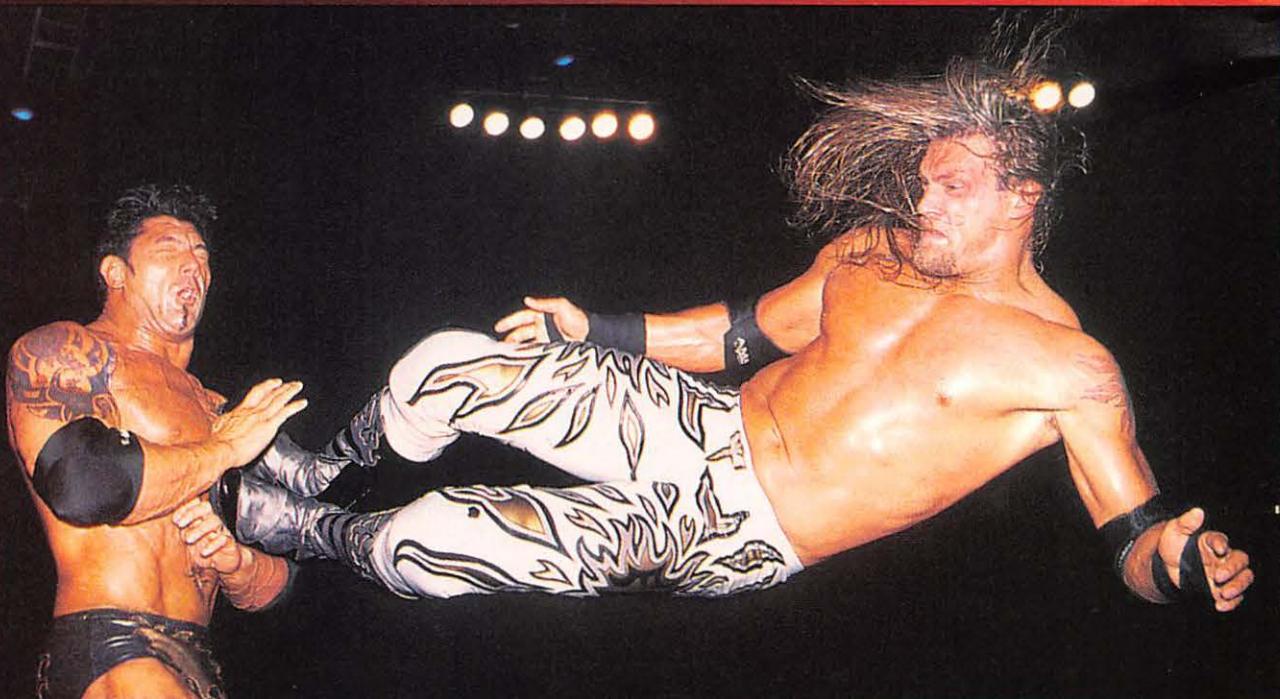
The only person Edge didn't blame for his problems was, well, Edge.

However, if Edge doesn't get a title shot against Triple-H anytime soon, he only has himself to blame. His actions prior to Taboo Tuesday—when he transformed from a popular fan favorite into a sniveling heel—and his actions at Taboo Tuesday might have made it near impossible for him to achieve the kind of success that he believes he so deserves.

Right now, Triple-H likes Edge. He won't say it, but he appreciates the way Edge helped him during his title defense against Michaels. In fact, Triple-H likes Edge so much that it wouldn't come as a shock if he offered the Canadian a spot in Evolution. After all, Edge is tall, good-looking, talented, and always within an arm's reach of finding the strength within himself to become the Raw champion.



Edge had a lot of nasty things to say to ringside fans at Taboo Tuesday. A lot of them probably voted for Michaels to take on Triple-H. He was justifiably frustrated, but what he did about it made little sense.



Triple-H sees this, and he doesn't want Edge to find his inner champion, which is why Edge would be a perfect fit for Evolution. Trips could control Edge—just like he controls Batista and once controlled Randy Orton—and keep him out of the championship picture, and also use his talents to help his own career.

See, by helping out Helmsley during his match against Michaels, Edge probably unwittingly wrote himself a ticket into heel oblivion. As long as he stays on his current course, he might never get a title shot against Helmsley—whether he joins Evolution or not.

Of course, this means that Edge's only hope of earning a series of title shots against Helmsley is by becoming a fan favorite again—a challenge that appears to be borderline impossible at this point. He's already ticked off Shawn Michaels and Chris Benoit, on whom he'd want to be able to rely for backup during a feud with Triple-H. (Remember, a feud with Triple-H means a feud with Evolution.) If he can't depend on those two men to have his back (and right now, he most certainly can't), there's no way he can compete against Helmsley in the long term.

By alienating himself from two of Raw's most effective fan favorites, he's alienated himself from the people who could most help him achieve his goal of becoming Raw champion. He's made it harder for them to like him, let alone help him. Where they might have once cheered him on if he were wrestling Triple-H, he now has to wonder if they won't be trying to find some way to ruin his chances of grabbing championship gold.

If Edge has any hope of defeating Triple-H for the Raw championship, he's going to have to refuse the friendship of those who would be his friends and ignore the fact that he's ruined the friendships of

Instead of battling Batista and the rest of Evolution (above and below), Edge might feel like joining the group. Triple-H would probably be glad to have him. One problem: If he did, he'd be even less likely to challenge for the Raw title than he is now.



those he people he most needs to be his friend.

In other words, he's going to have to get past the fact that he—and only he—might have obliterated his own championship dreams. □

A Salute To THE LEGENDS

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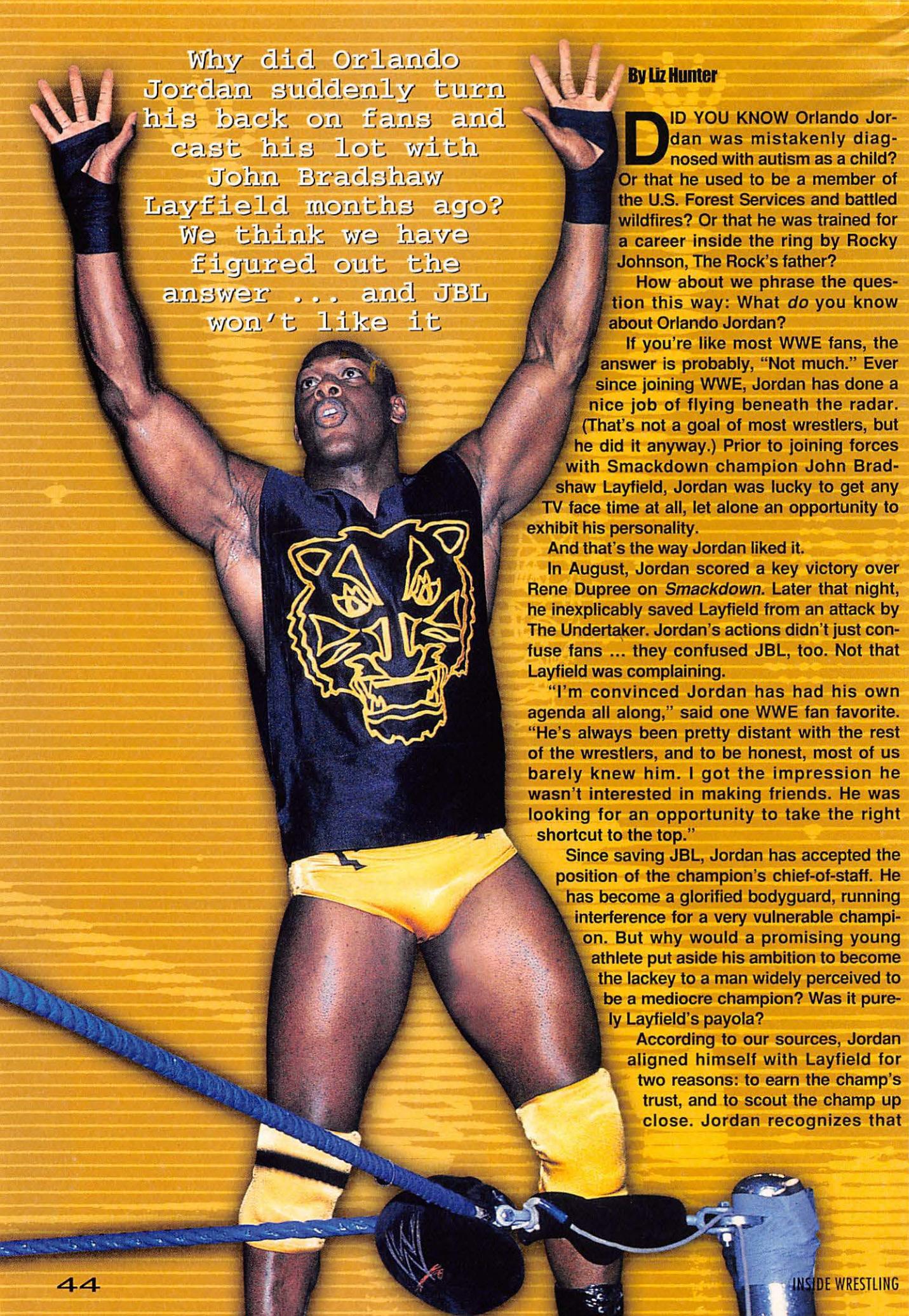
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Why did Orlando
Jordan suddenly turn
his back on fans and
cast his lot with
John Bradshaw
Layfield months ago?
We think we have
figured out the
answer . . . and JBL
won't like it

By Liz Hunter

DID YOU KNOW Orlando Jordan was mistakenly diagnosed with autism as a child? Or that he used to be a member of the U.S. Forest Services and battled wildfires? Or that he was trained for a career inside the ring by Rocky Johnson, The Rock's father?

How about we phrase the question this way: What *do* you know about Orlando Jordan?

If you're like most WWE fans, the answer is probably, "Not much." Ever since joining WWE, Jordan has done a nice job of flying beneath the radar. (That's not a goal of most wrestlers, but he did it anyway.) Prior to joining forces with Smackdown champion John Bradshaw Layfield, Jordan was lucky to get any TV face time at all, let alone an opportunity to exhibit his personality.

And that's the way Jordan liked it.

In August, Jordan scored a key victory over Rene Dupree on *Smackdown*. Later that night, he inexplicably saved Layfield from an attack by The Undertaker. Jordan's actions didn't just confuse fans . . . they confused JBL, too. Not that Layfield was complaining.

"I'm convinced Jordan has had his own agenda all along," said one WWE fan favorite. "He's always been pretty distant with the rest of the wrestlers, and to be honest, most of us barely knew him. I got the impression he wasn't interested in making friends. He was looking for an opportunity to take the right shortcut to the top."

Since saving JBL, Jordan has accepted the position of the champion's chief-of-staff. He has become a glorified bodyguard, running interference for a very vulnerable champion. But why would a promising young athlete put aside his ambition to become the lackey to a man widely perceived to be a mediocre champion? Was it purely Layfield's payola?

According to our sources, Jordan aligned himself with Layfield for two reasons: to earn the champ's trust, and to scout the champ up close. Jordan recognizes that

SECRET AGENT MAN!

Orlando Jordan's Real Agenda Is Classified

JBL is beatable—so beatable, in fact, that perennial mid-carder Hardcore Holly has even scored televised DQ and countout wins over him.

By making himself an irreplaceable component of JBL's success, Jordan has raised his profile and ensured his place on major cards. He has also forged a personal relationship with the champ ... for now.

"The moment Jordan sees an opportunity, he's going to turn against his boss and squirm his way in for a title shot," said our locker room source. "This is his plan of leapfrogging all the other contenders and getting his shot at the gold. I'd bet money on it."

If that scenario turns out to be true, Jordan would enter that championship match with a significant mental edge. He no doubt would have acquainted himself with Layfield's weaknesses, and would be facing JBL without the champ's greatest weapon: *him*.

Not surprisingly, Jordan denied any such plot and said our source was "clearly a bitter prelim bum."

"I am with Mr. Layfield because I recognize greatness when I see it," Jordan said. "Anyone claiming I would abuse the authority the [Smackdown] champion has given me is being disingenuous and unfair."

Much like his past, Jordan's motivations remain shrouded in mystery, but we suggest JBL keep a close eye on his right-hand man. □



Orlando Jordan and Heidenreich are supposed to be on the same side ... against The Undertaker, aren't they? Not if Jordan really does have the secret agenda we think he has!

O (UN)LUCKY

By Dan Murphy

THERE'S AN EXCELLENT chance that Joey Matthews has never seen the classic British film *O Lucky Man!* After all, it came out six years before he was born in 1979, and it doesn't get much play on this side of the Atlantic, other than in college film classes.

But maybe Mat-

thews ought to search for it the next time he goes to Blockbuster. We have a feeling he would appreciate its dark message. Here's a quick plot summary: The young, naive protagonist takes a job as a traveling coffee salesman, driving through the British countryside looking to drum up sales. He's a sharp kid, a real go-getter, and the people he meets expect great things of him.

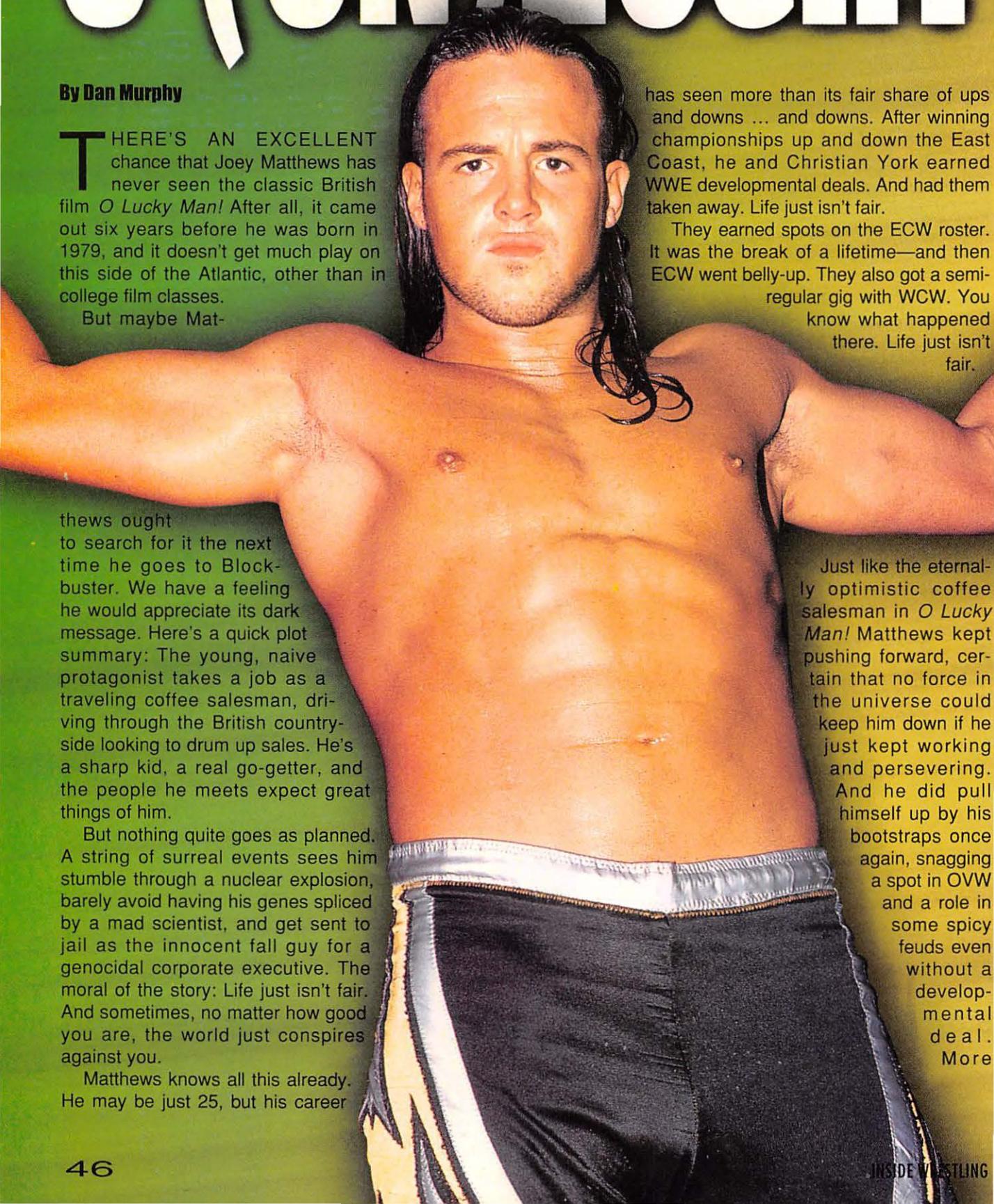
But nothing quite goes as planned. A string of surreal events sees him stumble through a nuclear explosion, barely avoid having his genes spliced by a mad scientist, and get sent to jail as the innocent fall guy for a genocidal corporate executive. The moral of the story: Life just isn't fair. And sometimes, no matter how good you are, the world just conspires against you.

Matthews knows all this already. He may be just 25, but his career

has seen more than its fair share of ups and downs ... and downs. After winning championships up and down the East Coast, he and Christian York earned WWE developmental deals. And had them taken away. Life just isn't fair.

They earned spots on the ECW roster. It was the break of a lifetime—and then ECW went belly-up. They also got a semi-regular gig with WCW. You know what happened there. Life just isn't fair.

Just like the eternally optimistic coffee salesman in *O Lucky Man!* Matthews kept pushing forward, certain that no force in the universe could keep him down if he just kept working and persevering. And he did pull himself up by his bootstraps once again, snagging a spot in OVW and a role in some spicy feuds even without a developmental deal. More



MAN!

**"If you have a friend upon you
think you can rely, you are a
lucky man. And if you find a
reason to live on and not to die,
you are a lucky man."**

—Alan Price, 1973

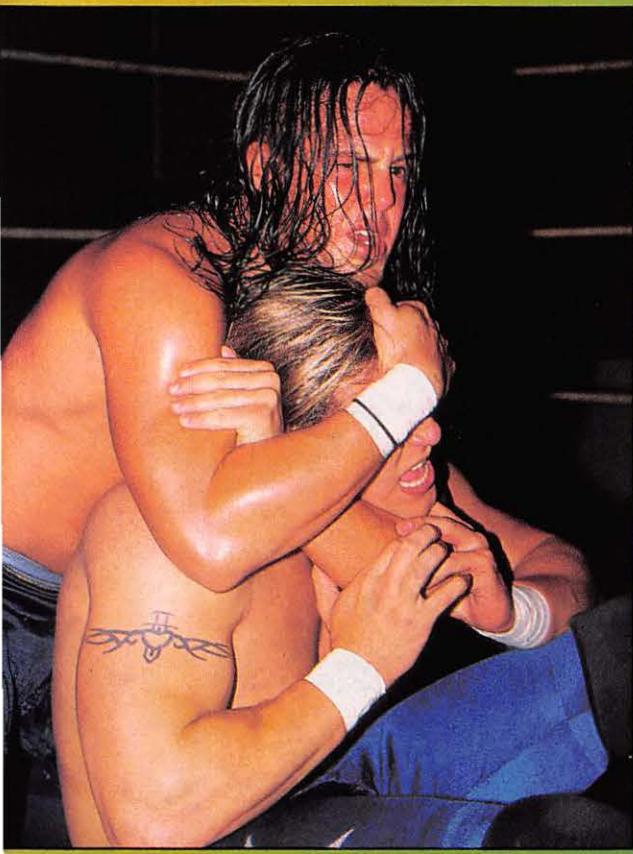
If It Wasn't For Bad Luck, Joey Matthews Would Have No Luck At All

recently, he has emerged as a force in the Philadelphia-based 3PW, where he upset A.J. Styles in January and beat Raven to win that promotion's heavyweight title in April. And let's not forget the hand-

ful of Ring of Honor appearances he has made or the fact that he would occasionally show up on Wednesday nights in Nashville to compete for TNA. Obviously all that bad luck and lousy timing hasn't soured him on the sport.

"Joey's got a great head on his shoulders, and he's one of the top talents on the independent circuit. He just hasn't had a lot of luck, and you can't blame him for that," said OVW promoter Jim Cornette. "It's just a matter of time before Joey breaks through and makes his mark. He's too good to fail."

At the end of the movie, our world-weary protagonist is discovered by a famous director and cast in a movie—one that could tell the story of his own life. Could a famous promoter be lurking around the corner for Matthews? He is long overdue for a good break. □



Joey Matthews uses a sleeper to subdue OVW's Johnny Jeter, a man who has what he once had: a WWE developmental contract. How many former developmental stars would return to a WWE developmental territory on their own years after losing their deal?



Two of these four men have made it to WWE: Shane "Hurricane" Helms (second from left) and Shannon Moore (far right). Matthews and former partner Christian York (far left) probably think they should have by now. Matthews, at least, hasn't given up trying.

YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD WOMAN DOWN:

Wrestling Is Kim Neilson's Only Desire

By Dan Murphy

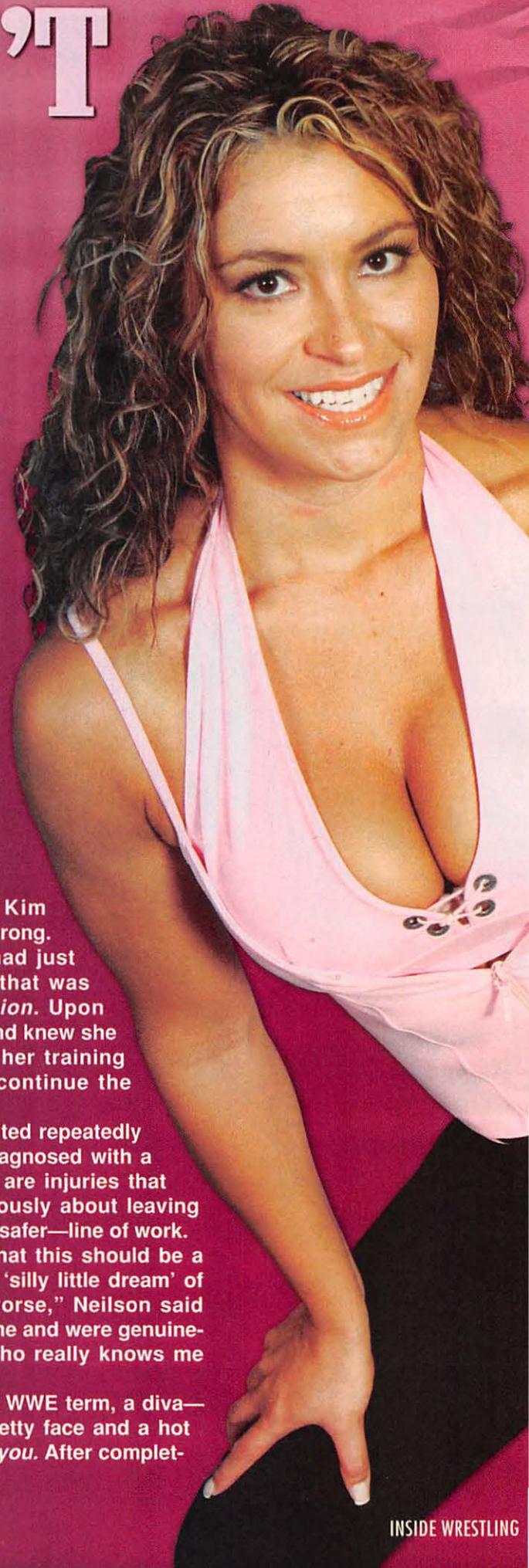
THE MOMENT SHE crashed to the canvas, Kim "Desire" Neilson knew something was terribly wrong.

The date was June 11, 2003, and Desire had just taken a brainbuster from Mercedes in a match that was being taped for TNA's syndicated show, *Xplosion*. Upon impact, she felt an intense pain in her lower back and knew she had just suffered a serious injury. But through her training under Dusty Rhodes, Desire knew she had to continue the match, which she valiantly did.

When she got back to the locker room, she vomited repeatedly and was rushed to the hospital, where she was diagnosed with a broken L1 vertebra and a broken tailbone. Those are injuries that would make just about any competitor think seriously about leaving wrestling behind and finding a different—and much safer—line of work.

"There were a few people who really told me that this should be a wakeup call, and that I should just give up on my 'silly little dream' of wrestling before I wind up in a wheelchair, or worse," Neilson said recently. "I know they were trying to watch out for me and were genuinely concerned about my well-being, but anyone who really knows me knows that wrestling is what I live to do."

If you think all a woman wrestler—or, to use the WWE term, a diva—needs to make it in the wrestling business is a pretty face and a hot body, let Desire's experiences be a wakeup call for you. After complet-



Kim Neilson could have walked away from wrestling after losing her WWE developmental deal. Some said she *should* have walked away after breaking her back. They don't realize how strong her desire to make it big in a brutal sport is

ing her training under Rhodes, the Falmouth, Michigan, native seemed to be on the fast track to fame and fortune when she was signed to a WWE developmental deal in April 2002. For a lifelong wrestling fan, it was a dream come true.

She worked her hardest at learning her craft and building up her body.

Then, inexplicably, WWE released her just three months later. It was a crushing blow, but she was determined to continue the pursuit of her dream.

In December 2002, she made her TNA debut. The promotion had been using some women wrestlers, but had no real plans for establishing a full-time women's division. Still, it was a step in the right direction, and Desire

gave her all, hoping she could snag a full-time position in the company, or at least get regular work.

After enjoying some success, she suffered her injury and spent the next six weeks in a back brace that stretched all the way from her neck to her waist.

"The rehab was brutal, something I wouldn't wish on my worst enemy," she said. "The doctors try to limit the amount of pain medication they give you because the pain is the best indicator of how well you're healing. So there were these times when the pain was just excruciating, and there was nothing I could do about it."

It hurt to sit, to stand, even to lay down, and then she had to get back on her feet and try to move around before any of her muscles started to atrophy. The thing that kept her going was a steadfast refusal to give up, and a determination to return to the ring.

After the long rehabilitation effort, Desire finally got medical approval to do just that. She has

returned to TNA, where she has been allied with Sonny Siaki and Pat Kenney and feuding with Trinity and Goldylocks, and continues to compete on the independent circuit. She has overcome the loss of a coveted developmental deal and a career-threatening injury, and somehow she remains optimistic.

"There are things I can control and things I can't," she said simply. "I'm going to do everything in my power to make a lasting mark in wrestling."

And it's going to take a heck of an obstacle to stop her. □

Kim "Desire" Neilson did pretty well in her feud with Trinity in TNA. It was amazing that she could do anything in the ring after suffering such a serious back injury in 2003.



KING IN SEARCH

KENNY BOLIN IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR WRESTLING'S NEXT SUPERSTAR

By Dave Lenker

WRESTLING TRIVIA TIME: What do John Cena, Nick "Eugene" Dinsmore, Carlito Caribbean Cool (Carly Colon), Rico, and Sean O'Haire all have in common? Sure, they all are—or have been—featured stars in WWE, but look just a little deeper and you'll find another common denominator.

At one time or another, they were all steeped in B.S.

As in Bolin Services. As in Kenny "The King" Bolin's ever-changing heel stable that has been making life miserable for Ohio Valley Wrestling fan favorites since July 1999.

A long-time wrestling fan who grew up idolizing Jerry Lawler and Ric Flair, Bolin wedged his foot in the door of OVW as the manager of the gargantuan Mr. Black, whom Bolin dubbed his "director of security." Perhaps one of the most frugal men on the planet (or as Jim Cornette would say, a man capable of pinching a penny so hard he gives Abraham Lincoln a bruise), Bolin amassed enough personal wealth to begin signing higher-caliber talent, and Bolin Services gradually grew into an OVW juggernaut.

But now that Bolin's most recent protege, Carlito Caribbean Cool, has joined WWE Smackdown full-time (as WWE U.S. champion), Louisville's resident "King" is more or less without an empire. What's a monarch to do? Rebuild!

"I think anyone with an ounce of gray matter could tell you that I am the greatest judge of talent in all of wrestling," the constantly self-promoting Bolin said. "The moment I sign someone to Bolin Services, their stock goes through the roof, and WWE comes sniffing around for them. That's why they call me the 'Starmaker.'"

If that was the case, why wouldn't WWE simply sign Bolin and utilize his talents as a talent scout, you might ask.

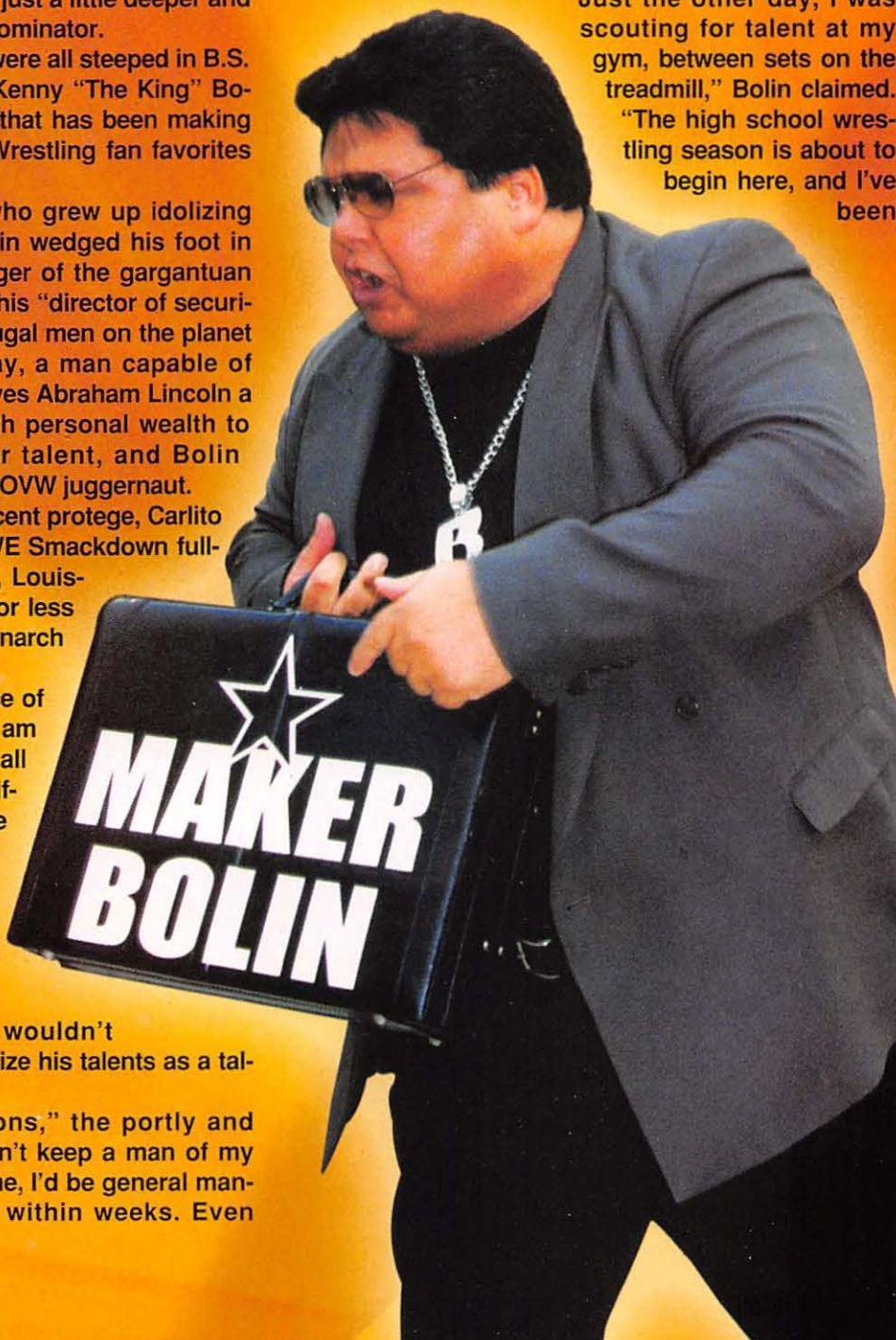
"Purely for political reasons," the portly and porcine Bolin replied. "You can't keep a man of my stature down. If WWE signed me, I'd be general manager of Raw or Smackdown within weeks. Even

Vince McMahon's job wouldn't be safe with Kenny Bolin in town!"

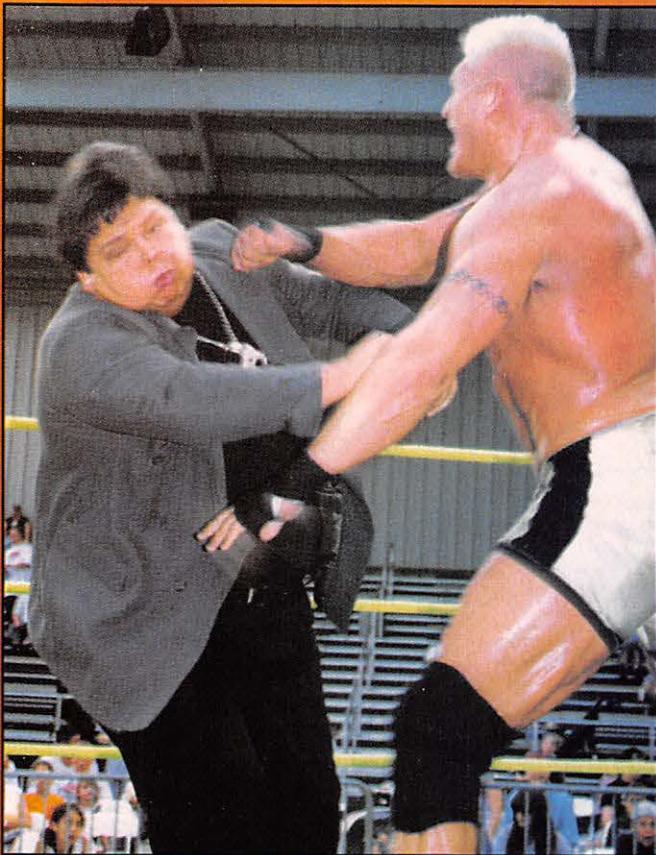
While he still has Nurse Lulu and Jerome Crony at his side, Bolin has made it clear that he's searching for wrestling's next breakout sensation. And his search is taking him to some unusual locations.

"Just the other day, I was scouting for talent at my gym, between sets on the treadmill," Bolin claimed.

"The high school wrestling season is about to begin here, and I've been



OF A KINGDOM:

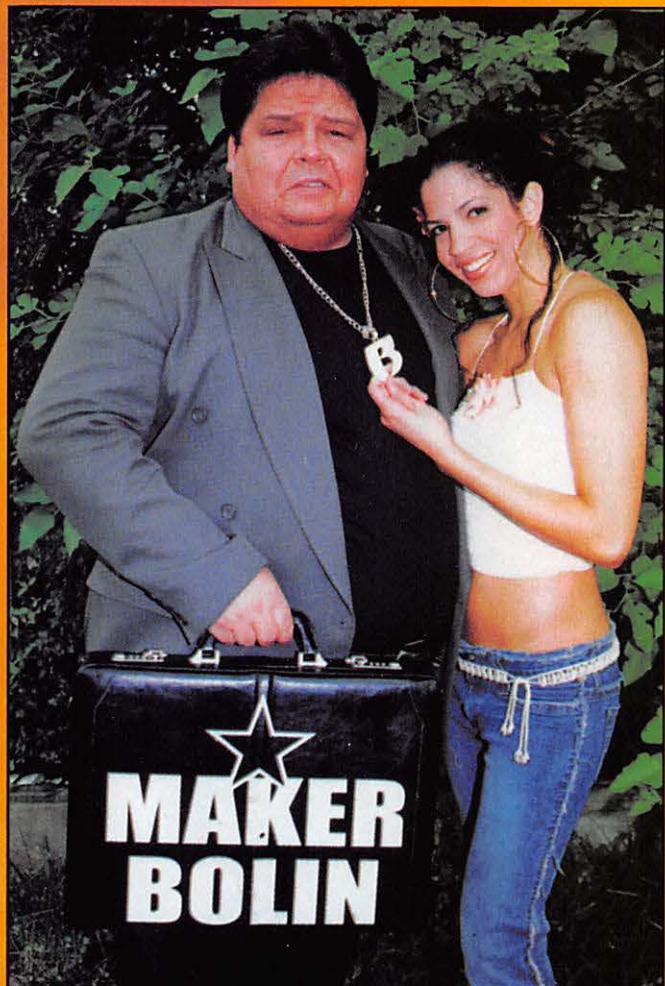


Obnoxious and shifty as he is, Bolin has to take his licks now and then. Here it's now-former OVW star Heidenreich taking him out with a big right hand. Rest assured that like a cockroach, Bolin always comes back.

calling coaches to find out about this year's senior crop. I've even checked with every road crew and highway department in Kentuckiana to see what kind of horses they've got out there doing the heavy lifting that could be better suited to a life inside the ring."

While the skeptics might (okay, they do) doubt Bolin's professed methods, especially the part about the sets on the treadmill, it's hard to argue with the success he has had in OVW.

"It's no secret I have nothing but disdain for the man, but you have to give the devil his due," Cornette said. "Bolin has a way of finding young and



Maybe Bolin will find a way to mold Nurse Lulu into the next Trish Stratus ... or Stacy Keibler. Or maybe his latest scouting mission will land him a new star waiting to be made.

impressionable kids and telling them he can make them stars. Generally, they turn against the fat slob when they realize he's nothing but a con man with an ego, but he makes his money off them by that time, and then the wrestlers go on to bigger and better things."

Call Bolin a starmaker or a charlatan, a king or a fool. He says he's going to find wrestling's next big star, and for some reason, we believe him. □

**HE'S FAT, HE'S OBNOXIOUS, HE'S CHEAP,
HE HAS A BIG MOUTH, AND HE'S NOT TO BE TRUSTED.
BUT OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING MANAGER EXTRAORDINAIRE
KENNY BOLIN SURE DOES KNOW HOW TO SPOT TALENT
WHEN HE SEES IT. JUST CHECK HIS RESUME**

DUNN & MARCOS: ROCKIN' ROH LIKE A HURRICANE!

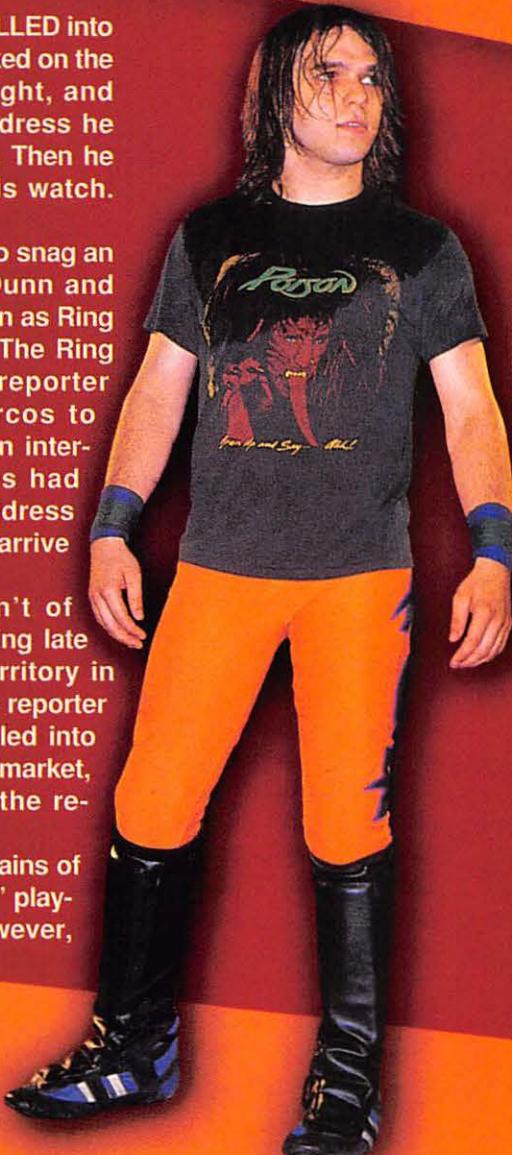
By Dan Murphy

THE REPORTER PULLED into the parking lot, flicked on the car's overhead light, and double-checked the address he had written in his notes. Then he took another look at his watch. Almost midnight.

The assignment was to snag an interview with Kevin Dunn and Mean Marcos, also known as Ring of Honor cult favorites The Ring Crew Express. The reporter had e-mailed Marcos to schedule a sitdown interview, and Marcos had given him this address and asked him to arrive at midnight.

The late hour wasn't of much concern, as keeping late hours goes with the territory in wrestling. But when the reporter realized he had just pulled into the lot of a closed supermarket, he figured he was on the receiving end of a rib.

When he heard the strains of Poison's "Unskinny Bop" playing in the distance, however,



Like a roadie filling in for a sick drummer, Dunn and Marcos graduated from the ring crew to one of Ring of Honor's most popular teams. But their road to the top has been longer and more winding than even most ardent ROH fans realize

he knew he was in the right place.

He found Dunn and Marcos hanging out in back, playing tunes, and downing liter bottles of Jolt Cola.

"Glad you made it, man," Dunn said to the reporter. "We're sleeping out for concert tickets. In just nine hours, tickets for the Naked Beggars show go on sale."

"Featuring Jeff Labar and Eric Brittingham of Cinderella," Marcos chimed in gleefully.

"Some would say Cinderella isn't as popular now as they used to be," Dunn said. "I would say their appeal has just become more selective."

Dunn and Marcos wear their outdated musical preferences on their sleeves (literally, with old school hair metal band T-shirts), and their tragically unhip tastes have made them one of the most popular opening acts in ROH. They earned their spots in ROH by traveling from town to town and helping set up and tear down the ring and entranceways, and were given opportunities to show their skills in the ring. For their first year or so with the company, wins were hard—uh, make that *impossible*—to come by.

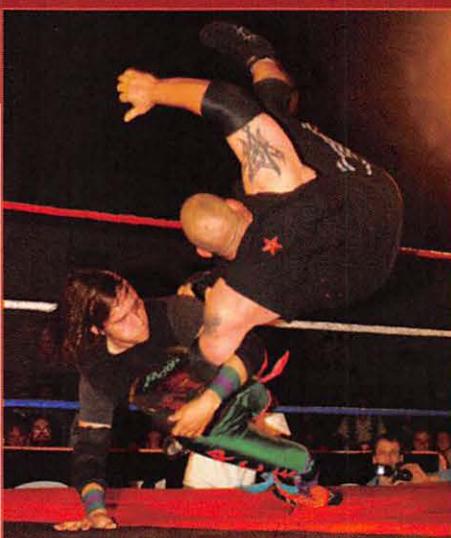
But Dunn and Marcos stayed resolute and worked to improve as individuals and as a team. And their hard work has begun to pay off. Dunn and Marcos have gradually become players in the tag team division and earned a reputation as two up-and-comers on the indy circuit.

Their route to prominence in ROH was even longer than all but their most hardcore fans realize. For the past few years, Dunn and Marcos have wrestled—both separately and as a tag team—all across upstate New York. They have feuded with each other, held singles and tag titles, and competed against a variety of competition, from local kids with stars in their eyes to grizzled veterans looking for whatever payday they could still grab. They learned what they could from those experiences, and now they're showing their skills in front of the discerning ROH fans.

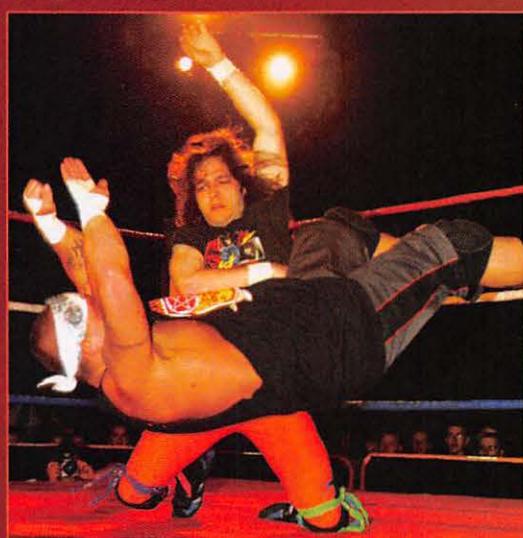
But on this night, they simply wanted to relax.

"We've been traveling all over the Northeast for a few years now," Marcos said. "And when we're not on the road, we're studying tapes, working on new moves, and doing grunt work. Well, we're not about to miss this show, and we're going to be first in line for tickets."

Whether it's their attitude toward wrestling or scoring concert tickets, Dunn and Marcos are as dedicated a team as you're likely to find anywhere. But when Dunn popped a Jackyl cassette into the boom box, even the reporter had to leave. □



That's Dunn taking over DeVito over with a Rick Steamboat-like armdrag (left), and Marcos taking down H.C. Loc with a vengeance (right). The two members of Ring of Honor's Ring Crew Express are just tough, talented, and scrappy enough to take a run at the ROH tag title. After that ... who knows!



THE SIMON DEAN DIET

**Guaranteed
To Put Pounds
Of Gold Around
His Waist!**

By Dan Murphy

EVERYWHERE HE GOES, it seems like Mike Bucci has to reinvent himself.

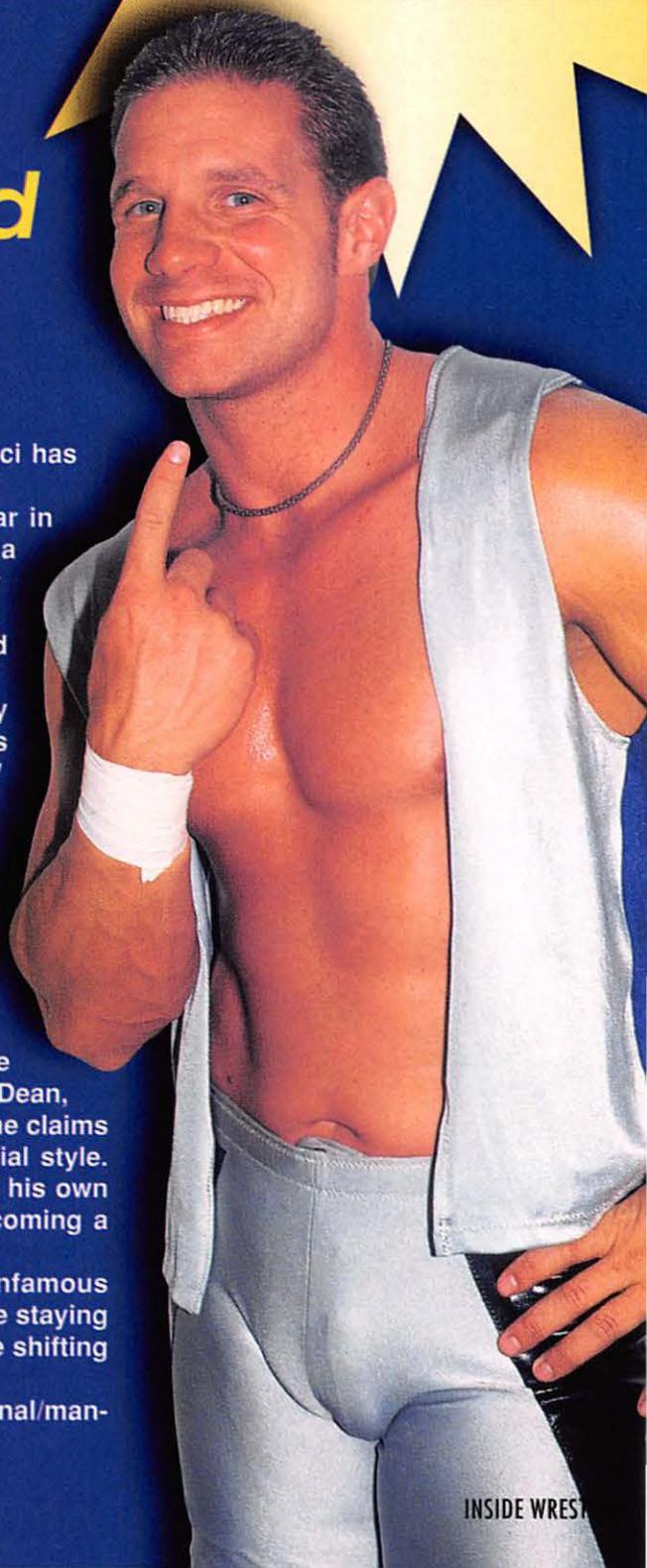
When he first appeared on the national radar in ECW, Bucci used his passion for comic books to create a goofy superhero character known as Super Nova. Super Nova—later shortened to Nova—became an extremely popular comedy character alongside Stevie Richards and The Blue Meanie in ECW's Blue World Order.

Though Nova gradually developed from a comedy sidekick to a competent mid-carder (much like WWE's Hurricane has done), his career stalled when ECW closed its doors. After a stint back on the Northeast indy circuit, Bucci landed in Ohio Valley Wrestling, where he all but eliminated the comedy and focused on becoming a better all-around wrestler. WWE developmental deal in hand, again, he reinvented himself as the leader of The Jersey Crew, in which he embraced his New Jersey roots and came off like a cross between Tony Soprano and Jon Bon Jovi.

But his most ambitious makeover has been the one we have seen on *Raw* recently. Now known as Simon Dean, he has become a fitness guru—or at least that's what he claims to be—shilling his diet and exercise plan in infomercial style. Like his previous personae, this one is also based on his own life, as Bucci was an overweight teenager before becoming a fitness buff and gym rat.

But is his "diet plan" just another fad—like the infamous Buddy Rose "Blowaway Diet Plan"—or does Dean have staying power? Based on what we know of the man behind the shifting identities, we'd have to go with the latter.

It's not often that you can get long-time promotional/man-



Does Simon Dean have the next Atkins diet at his disposal? Uh, probably not, but who cares! Just keep an eye on what he can do in the ring!

agerial rivals Jim Cornette and Paul Heyman to agree on anything. But one thing both of those outspoken men agree on is that Dean is an underrated wrestler no one should take lightly.

"He's one of the most intelligent and innovative wrestlers I've ever known," said Cornette, the legendary manager who currently oversees OVW. "The guy is always working on new moves, but he's also smart enough not to try some half-baked move at a crucial moment in a match. He's got

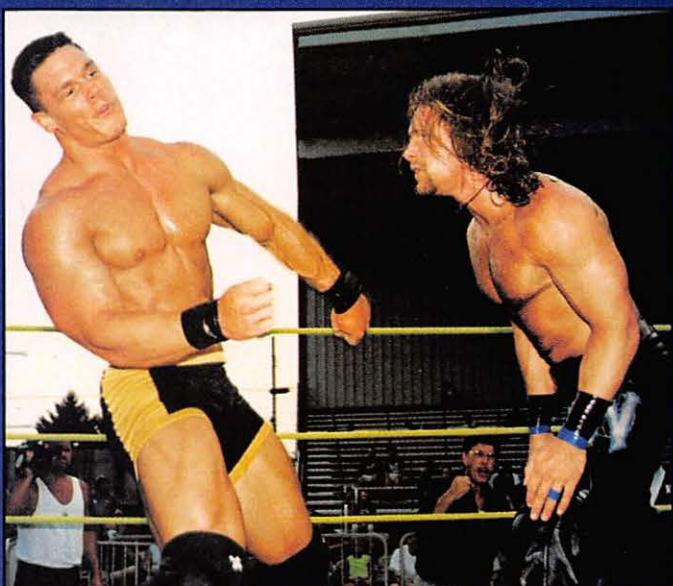
counters most guys could never imagine, and I can promise you he's going to surprise a lot of those guys on Raw."

Heyman also thinks Dean will be a success in WWE, but for different reasons.

"Versatile and gritty—that's how I describe him," Heyman said. "You could dress him up like a ballerina and send him out there, and he'd still be able to give you a solid match and entertain the fans. On top of that, the man has no fear. He doesn't back down from anyone, no matter how big or strong they are. People have been telling him he'd never make it for years, but he kept on working and fighting for everything he's got, and now he's got a WWE contract."

Dean is already trying to agitate fans and his fellow wrestlers. He's calling others fat and lazy and ripping on their eating habits. And there's not a wrestler alive who wouldn't love to get his hands on a grating self-help shill who's rubbing their noses in their shortcomings.

But what happens when that shill turns out to be a heck of a wrestler in his own right? The wins start piling up. And it wouldn't surprise us to see Dean start packing on the pounds, in the form of the Intercontinental title. □



Super Nova flew through the air like a superhero when he was in ECW (left), but he turned a lot more serious against the likes of John Cena in OVW (above). Now, as Simon Dean, we like the man's chances for WWE success.

TO BE THE

MANA



"I'm Doing Exactly What I Was Born To Do"

By Liz Hunter

THE MOMENT MANA arrived at the WXW wrestling school in Pennsylvania, Afa the Wild Samoan knew he was staring at something special.

It wasn't just Mana's awesome size (6'5", 350 pounds) that caught the former WWF World tag team champion's eye. It was his uncanny wrestling aptitude. His massive protege absorbed wrestling lessons like a sponge, naturally picking up on subtle details of each move demonstrated by WXW trainer Headshrinker Samu.

"You could see it in his eyes," Afa recalled. "He had an intensity and focus that very few others show. Right away, I knew this kid had a chance to make a huge impact in the business."

The New Zealand native streaked through the WXW school like a supercharged bolt of lightning, shattering the record for fastest graduate that was set by a pretty accomplished cruiserweight by the name of Billy Kidman half a decade earlier.

In 2000, Mana made his pro debut, adopting the nickname

"The Polynesian Warrior." With his blend of raw power and his mastery of stiff setup maneuvers like the Polynesian plunge (a double-underhook flapjack) and his version of the Rikishi driver—not to mention his brutal top-rope Samoan drop finisher—Mana established himself as a dominant force in the promotion. He also reportedly caught the eye of WWE scouts, who continue to monitor his progress.

After being named WXW's most outstanding wrestler for 2001, Mana unexpectedly took a leave of

absence from the wrestling business and returned to his homeland. He wanted to examine his priorities and the culture he passionately holds dear. Certain Native American tribes might call Mana's sabbatical a vision quest, a time and journey of deep introspection to examine a man's place in his world. Mana immersed himself in the *haka*, the Maori ritual dance that is seen as a spiritual and cultural expression of the passion and vigor of the Maori race.

In 2003, Afa contacted his prize student and asked him if he was ready to return to the U.S. and continue his wrestling career. Mana searched deep within himself and found his answer.

Yes, he was ready to return.

"I am doing exactly what I was born to do," Mana said. "Wrestling is in my blood, in my veins, and in my heart. I want to continue to compete for personal honor and for the honor of my people. If the heavens allow, I will continue to compete and to have great success."

"I needed time to reflect," Mana continued. "Now I am refreshed, physically and spiritually, and reinvigorated. I am ready and hopeful to meet all the expectations Afa and my fans have of me."

And there's no shortage of expectations. Mana is the reigning WXW heavyweight champion, and there's a good chance he will be the next big Islander to get the callup to WWE. But Mana is not putting his fate in anyone's hands other than his own.

"I am happy with my life path, and as long as I can look upon myself with pride and respect, I do not need anyone else's approval," he said. "My fate is my will, and the will of the gods, and I am secure with my place in the universe. That is all that matters." □

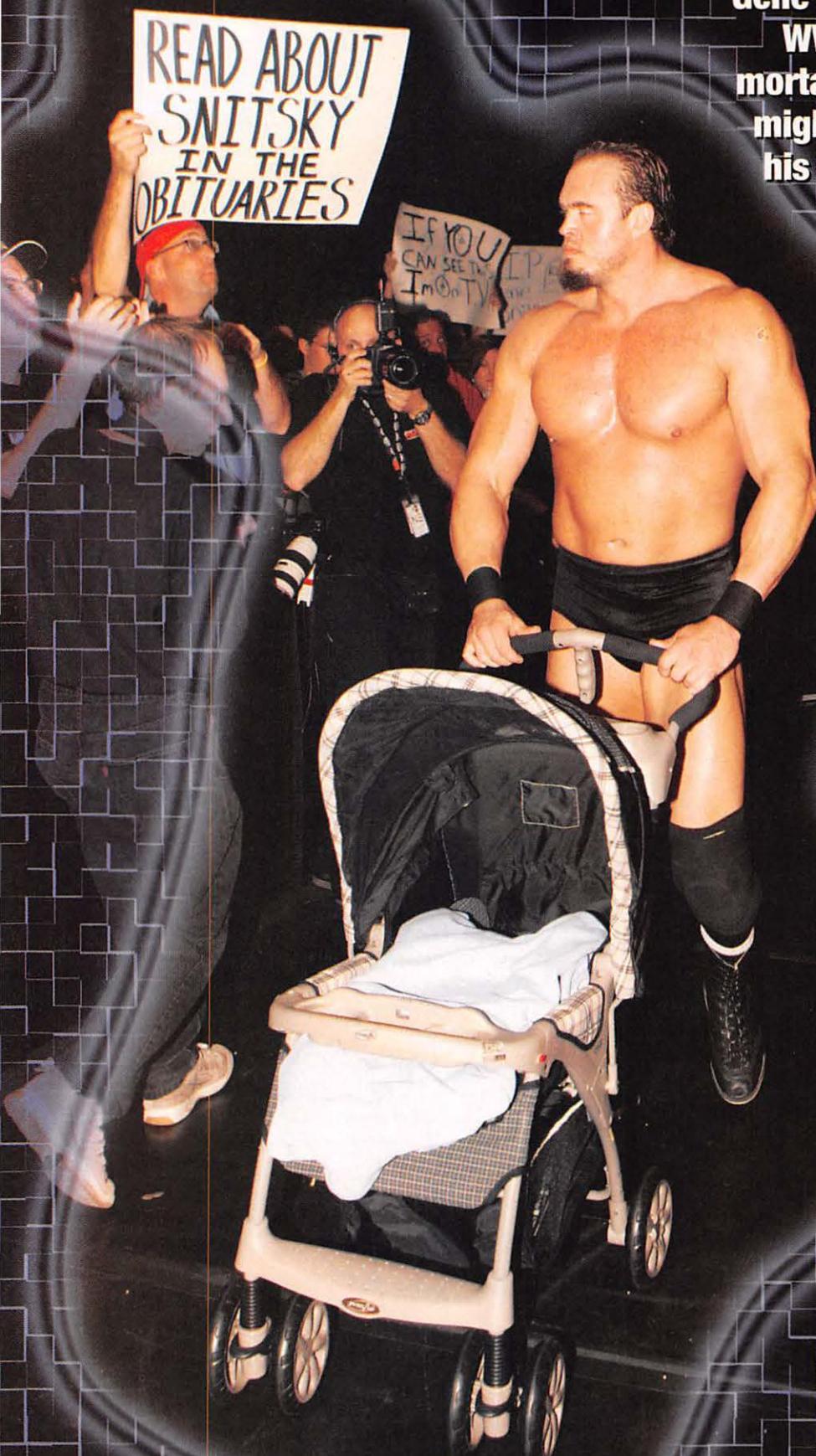


Mana uses all of his Polynesian warrior strength to overpower Rapid Fire Maldonado during a recent WXW show. After taking an extended hiatus from the sport, he has returned more motivated to make it big than ever.

The reigning World Xtreme Wrestling heavyweight champion walked away from wrestling just as his career was taking off. Now "The Polynesian Warrior" is back, and he is more ready than ever to become a major star

KANE'S SNIT-FIT!

Gene Snitsky's first televised WWE match earned him a mortal enemy, and the clock might already be ticking on his days with the company



The sign in the crowd says it all. Whether what happened with Snitsky and Kane and Lita was an accident or not, Snitsky is using it to his advantage now. And he's taking a monster risk.

"The Big Red Machine" Could Spell The End Of "Mean" Gene

By Dan Murphy

SEPTEMBER 13, 2004, should have been one of the best days of Gene Snitsky's life. After working his way up through the independent ranks in WXX and OVW, Snitsky (formerly known as "Mean" Gene Mondo) was told he was going to make his WWE TV debut.

The bad news was Snitsky was booked to face Kane, and because of consequences beyond his control, his career and life have taken a dramatic turn for the worse since.

In that fateful encounter, Kane tried to dismember Snitsky in an effort to win over his reluctant bride, Lita. Facing an all-out onslaught from one of wrestling's most fearsome competitors, Snitsky increased his chances for survival by smashing "The Big Red Machine" with a steel chair.

Unfortunately for all involved, that chair shot sent Kane reeling into Lita, who collapsed to the mat holding her abdomen. We later learned the pregnant Lita had suffered a miscarriage, and Kane is holding Snitsky squarely accountable.

At first, Snitsky wisely denied responsibility for the accident. "It wasn't my fault," Snitsky told *Raw* viewers (repeatedly). "I had a job to do, and I did it."

Most fans would agree with those sentiments. After all, Snitsky only acted out of self-defense when he armed himself with the chair, and he clearly had no intention of harming Lita. However, in the following weeks, Snitsky's tone took a gradual change. Compare his quote above to these recent comments:

"I wouldn't say [the accident] put a damper on things," he said

in an interview on [wwe.com](http://www.wwe.com). "If anything, I'd say it's going to help my career. Like they say, there's no such thing as bad publicity. So if this is what it takes to get my name out there and for people to know who Gene Snitsky is, then oh well, that's just the way things have to be."

Now Snitsky is actually leveraging Lita's miscarriage for his own career advancement. Looking to profit off another person's misfortune is one of the lowest things anyone can do. And Kane is determined to make Snitsky pay for his sins.

Kane isn't the type of wrestler to make idle threats. He's at his ultraviolent best when he doesn't care about winning or losing, but simply wants to injure an opponent. Ask Shane McMahon, Matt Hardy, or The Undertaker about how dangerous Kane can be when he's angry.

"When you step into the ring against Kane, you're going to war," said Chris Benoit, who feuded with Kane last summer. "This Snitsky kid looks is big and strong, but he's in for a baptism of fire. If he thinks he can rub Kane's nose in this tragedy and use it for his own benefit, he's sorely mistaken."

Kane is beatable—Benoit and others have proven that. But he's also an extremely dangerous competitor, and this might be the angriest he's ever been. Snitsky is trying to put on a brave face and deal with the hand fate has dealt him, but he's also pouring gasoline on a raging bonfire. A reckoning day is coming, and it just might be the beginning of the end of Snitsky's very brief WWE career. □



Snitsky could have apologized and tried to walk away quietly after causing Lita to lose her and Kane's baby. But he not only mocked Kane and Lita over it—he went on to viciously attack and provoke "The Big Red Machine." Big mistake!

SHEIK CHIC:

Magnus & Daivari's Transformation Is A Snake Oil Scheme!

By Matt Brock

IT TAKES A lot to strike a nerve with today's wrestling fan.

Today's fan has seen just about anything a wily wrestler or promoter can throw at him: necrophilia, xenophobia, miscarriages, misogyny. You name the sore spot, and pro wrestling has exploited it.

But the latest antics of Mark Magnus and Shawn Daivari have Ohio Valley Wrestling fans seeing red, white, and blue, and they're looking to ride that controversy straight into WWE.

In early-September, OVW



Mark Magnus—uh, Mohammed Hassan—has taken his Middle Eastern act pretty far in WWE already. The prayer rug routine in the ring is too much. That's Shawn Daivari looking to the heavens in the background.

What are a couple of developmental wrestlers to do when they fear that they might never be called up to WWE? Play the anti-American card of course! Mark Magnus and Shawn Daivari are the latest to try the disgusting tactic ... and succeed with it

mainstay Magnus returned to the promotion after a mysterious hiatus with Daivari, an indy standout who competed in the 2004 ECWA Super 8 Tournament. But the Magnus who returned to the Davis Arena in Louisville wasn't the same Magnus the fans knew and respected: He had become a sneering Middle Easterner. He and Daivari (who is of Iranian descent but was born in Minneapolis) began throwing money at fans in exchange for their ringside seats. Pledging allegiance to any Middle Eastern power doesn't play well in the heartland, and sparks flew.

The pair made a huge commotion that resulted in a heated brawl between Magnus and fan favorite Elijah Burke. When it was over, Jim Cornette declared that Magnus would never be allowed back into the building. However, Magnus has hooked up with a wealthy Islamic businessman who wants to control wrestling and employed a high-priced attorney to try to get around Cornette's ban. He has purchased time on OVW's weekly TV show to spread his propaganda.

So Magnus and Daivari have become the two most hated wrestlers in OVW ... the easy way.

But they have bigger ambitions.

"WWE is the platform we seek to tell the world just how the American foreign policy poisons the world," spat Daivari, who, up until now, had always been a soft-spoken and pleasant gentleman. "My associate and I are world-class athletes, but we have been held down by promoters due to our political beliefs. We will not rest until we receive our just desserts in WWE."

"The plight of my Arabic brothers has moved me to action," said Magnus, who just happens to be an

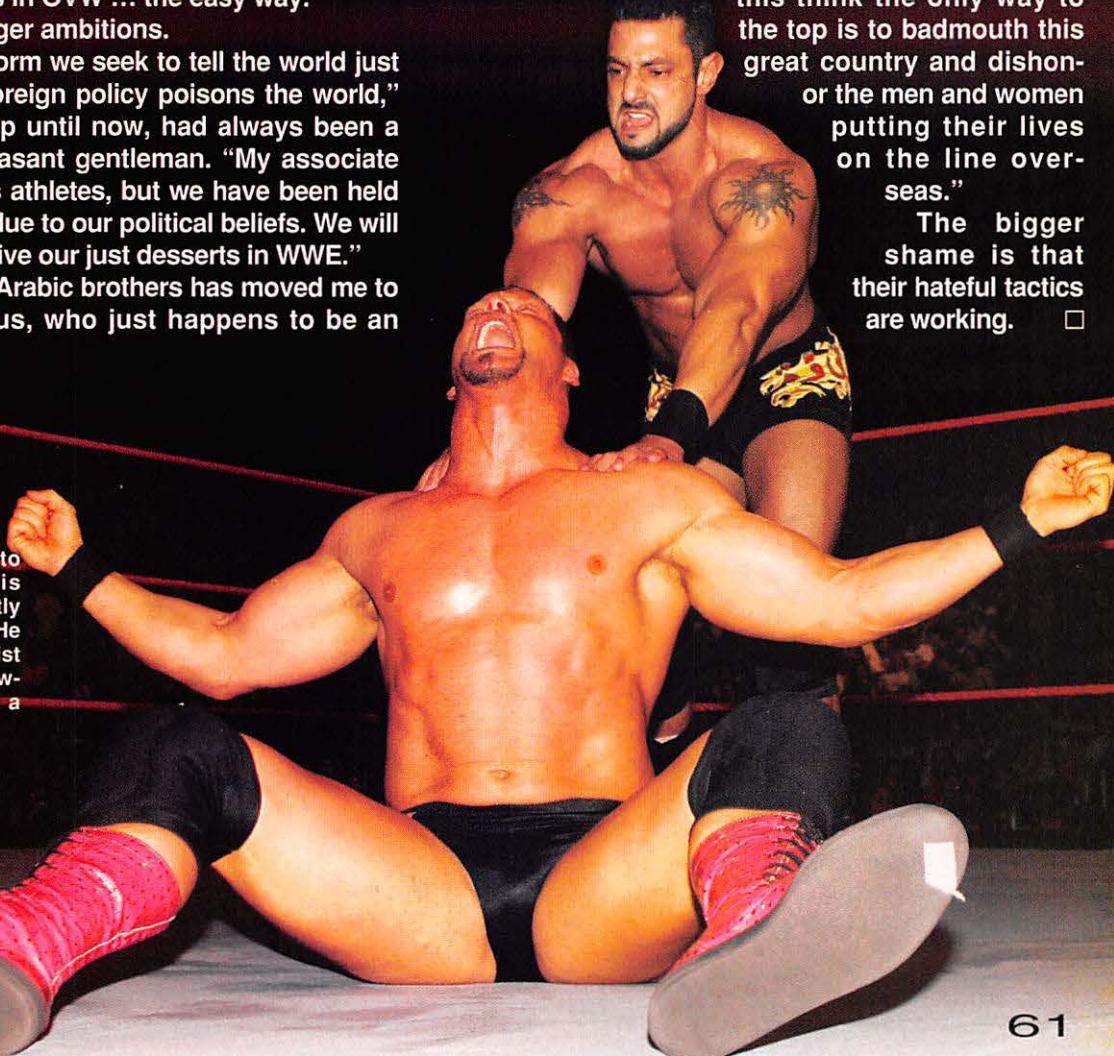
Italian-American from Syracuse, New York. "These inbred rednecks from Kentucky represent everything wrong with this country, and it's a pleasure to go before them and tell them how ignorant they are, right to their ugly, snaggle-toothed faces."

Just as Rob Conway doesn't have a drop of French or French-Canadian blood in his veins, both Magnus and Daivari are American citizens. They are simply and shamefully trying to use current events to take a shortcut to the top. As of press time, WWE had already used Magnus—under the name Mohammed Hassan—and Daivari—as his manager—at house shows and in dark matches. They might very well have appeared on WWE programming before this magazine hits newsstands. That doesn't sit well with OVW owner Danny Davis.

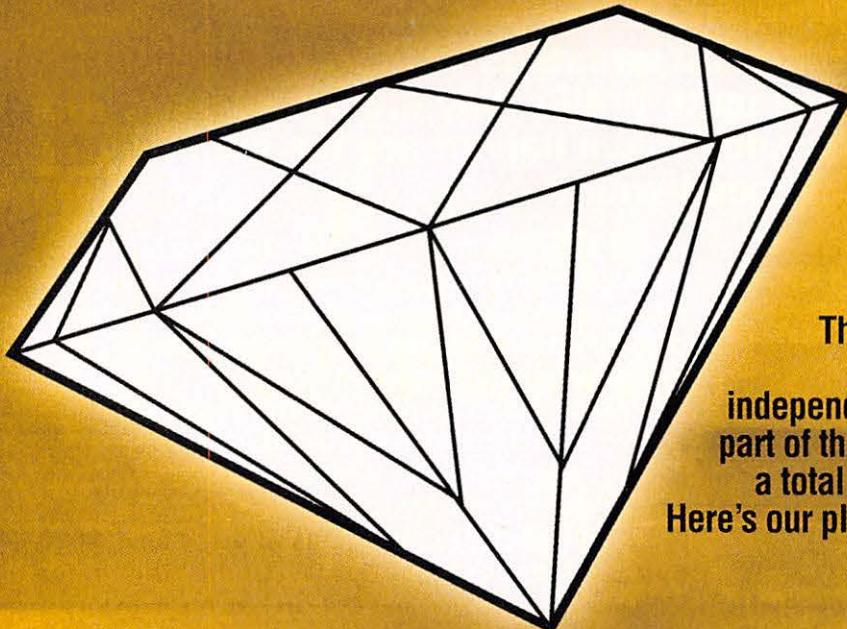
"I've known Mark for a few years, and this whole thing he's doing makes me sick," Davis said. "He's a talented young kid, but he's still got an awful lot to learn if you ask me. From the tapes I've seen, Daivari is a technically sound high-flyer. It's just a

shame talented kids like this think the only way to the top is to badmouth this great country and dishonor the men and women putting their lives on the line overseas."

The bigger shame is that their hateful tactics are working. □



Magnus had the talent to make it to WWE on his own, without conveniently changing his ethnicity. He and Daivari couldn't resist taking the shortcut, however. That's all it is ... a cheap shortcut.



Diamond

Our Plan To Help

The former Lance/Simon Diamond has been considered one of the top independent talents in the sport for the better part of the past decade. So why is Pat Kenney a total afterthought in the TNA title picture? Here's our plan to help Kenney discover his shine

By Liz Hunter

WE THOUGHT IT seemed like a good idea at the time too.

Simon Diamond was in a rut. When he and his long-time tag partner, Swinger, weren't struggling against America's Most Wanted, they were struggling under the inept management of their adviser, Glenn Gilberti. After months of tension, Diamond finally broke away from Swinger, Gilberti, and David Young and sought to start over on his own.

Simon said it was time to get serious. And to signify he was a new man, he began to compete under his real name, Pat Kenney.

It looked like Kenney was on the fast track to the upper echelon in TNA, but it just hasn't worked out that way. If anything, the name change and his attitude change actually hindered his career. "Irish" Pat Kenney moved even further away from the top than Simon Diamond was.

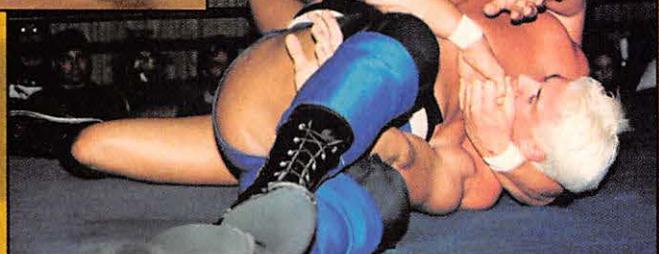
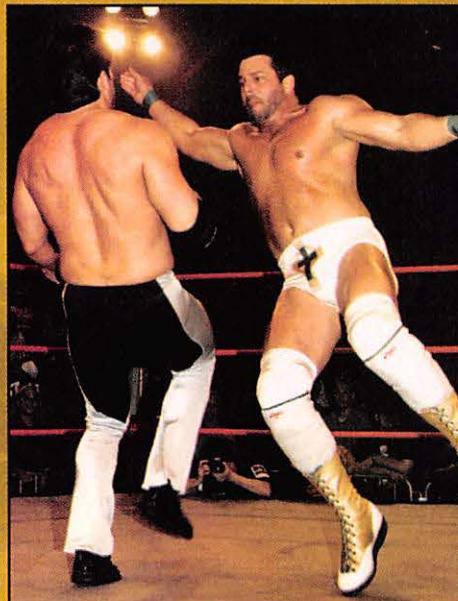
But it doesn't have to be that way. Kenney is extremely versatile, athletic, and charismatic, and we've come up with a few surefire steps that would help him climb to the top of TNA.

Lose the humility. Kenney—or should we say Diamond—was always at his best when he was getting under the fans' skin. When he's trying to be obnoxious, there are very few people who can do it better. Kenney's also a handsome guy who happened to be an item with one of the hottest divas in WWE for the longest time. He should start rubbing people's noses in that. Which brings us to ...

His own personal diva search. We're sure he'd deny it, but it must have eaten Kenney up inside that his

long-time girlfriend had a WWE contract and he didn't. He could use the fact that he helped train one of wrestling's hottest divas to his advantage. He ought to let everyone know that he's available and looking for the hottest woman in the game to be his manager. He could see if Trinity or Desire would be interested, but it might be best to start fresh and bring in some beautiful babe he encountered on the indy circuit somewhere. Having a gorgeous woman by his side would get him noticed in a hurry.

X marks the spot. Kenney may seem a little big for the X division, but there's no weight limit. And keep in mind that he won the 1998 Super 8 by outwrestling seven men who were smaller than him. Kenney would enjoy a significant strength advantage against the likes of A.J. Styles, Petey Williams, Kazarian, and Amazing Red. He could also have success against their high spot-based style by wrestling a lower-risk style. An X title would be a career highlight.

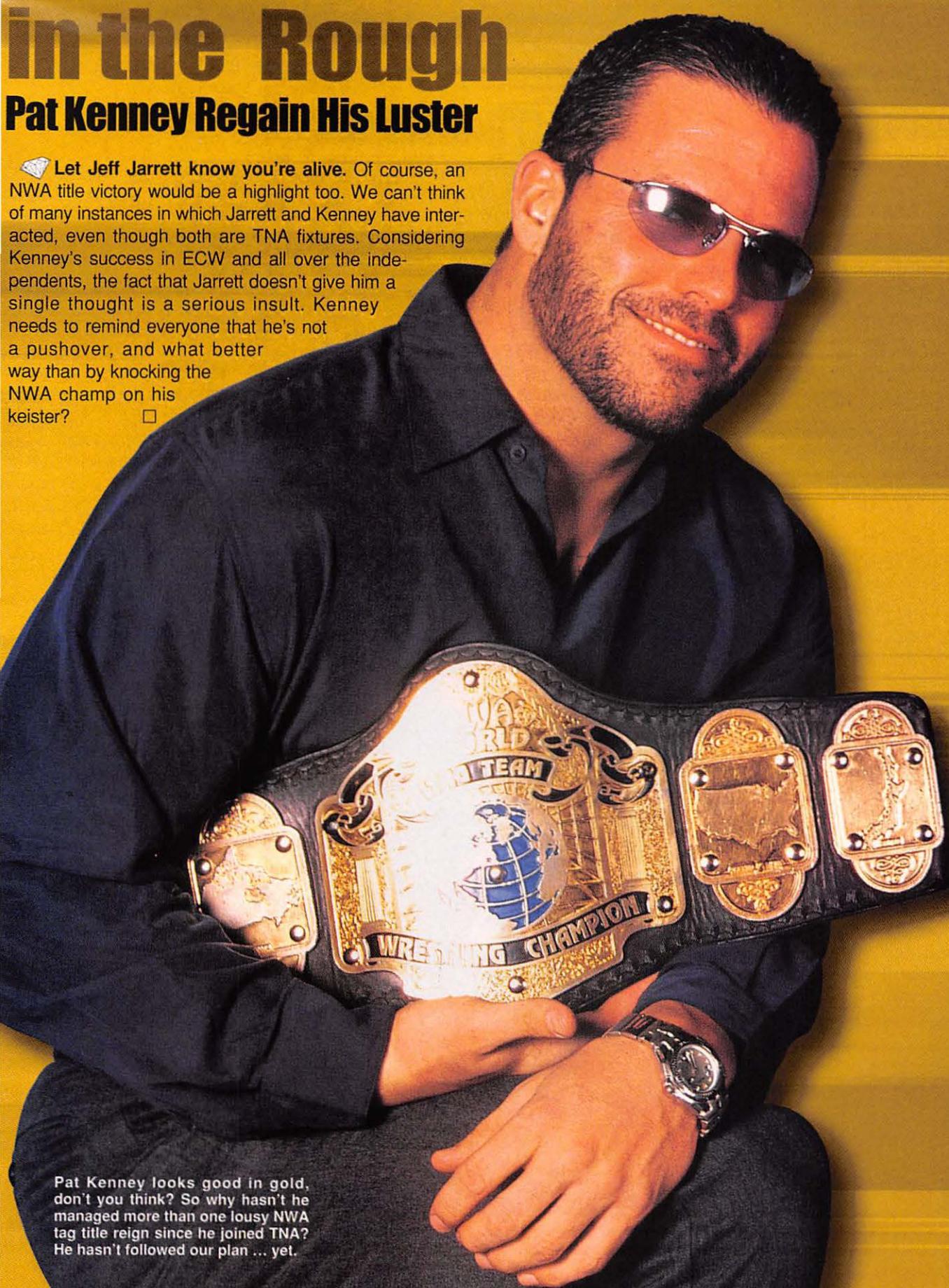


Kenney ought to be glad his feud with Glenn Gilberti is behind him (above left). It didn't help his status in TNA. His mat-based style (above) could be a surprise hit in the X division.

in the Rough

Pat Kenney Regain His Luster

Let Jeff Jarrett know you're alive. Of course, an NWA title victory would be a highlight too. We can't think of many instances in which Jarrett and Kenney have interacted, even though both are TNA fixtures. Considering Kenney's success in ECW and all over the independents, the fact that Jarrett doesn't give him a single thought is a serious insult. Kenney needs to remind everyone that he's not a pushover, and what better way than by knocking the NWA champ on his keister? □



Pat Kenney looks good in gold, don't you think? So why hasn't he managed more than one lousy NWA tag title reign since he joined TNA? He hasn't followed our plan ... yet.

What role should part-time stars have at WrestleMania?

"To me, the whole idea of bringing back an Austin or Hogan or Rock for 'Mania seems so transparent. It looks like the company is bringing them back just to cash in at WrestleMania. When it happens year after year, it doesn't seem so special anymore."

—Frank Krewda

SINCE ITS INCEPTION in 1985, WrestleMania has been WWE's showcase event. While some cards have been more entertaining than others, each card left at least one indelible impression on the minds of fans in attendance and of those viewing at home—whether it was Hulk Hogan bodyslamming Andre the Giant at WrestleMania III or Kane tombstoning Pete Rose at WrestleMania XIV.

In the early days, however, Vince McMahon, ever the showman, gave his superstars a safety net—the inclusion of mainstream stars. The list of non-wrestling celebrities who made at

least one WrestleMania appearance runs the gamut from G. Gordon Liddy to Muhammad Ali to Liberace to Pamela Anderson. The idea was to draw the world's attention to McMahon's extravaganza. After all, if the elite of the entertainment, political, and sporting communities lent their names to WrestleMania, it was destined to become a must-see event.

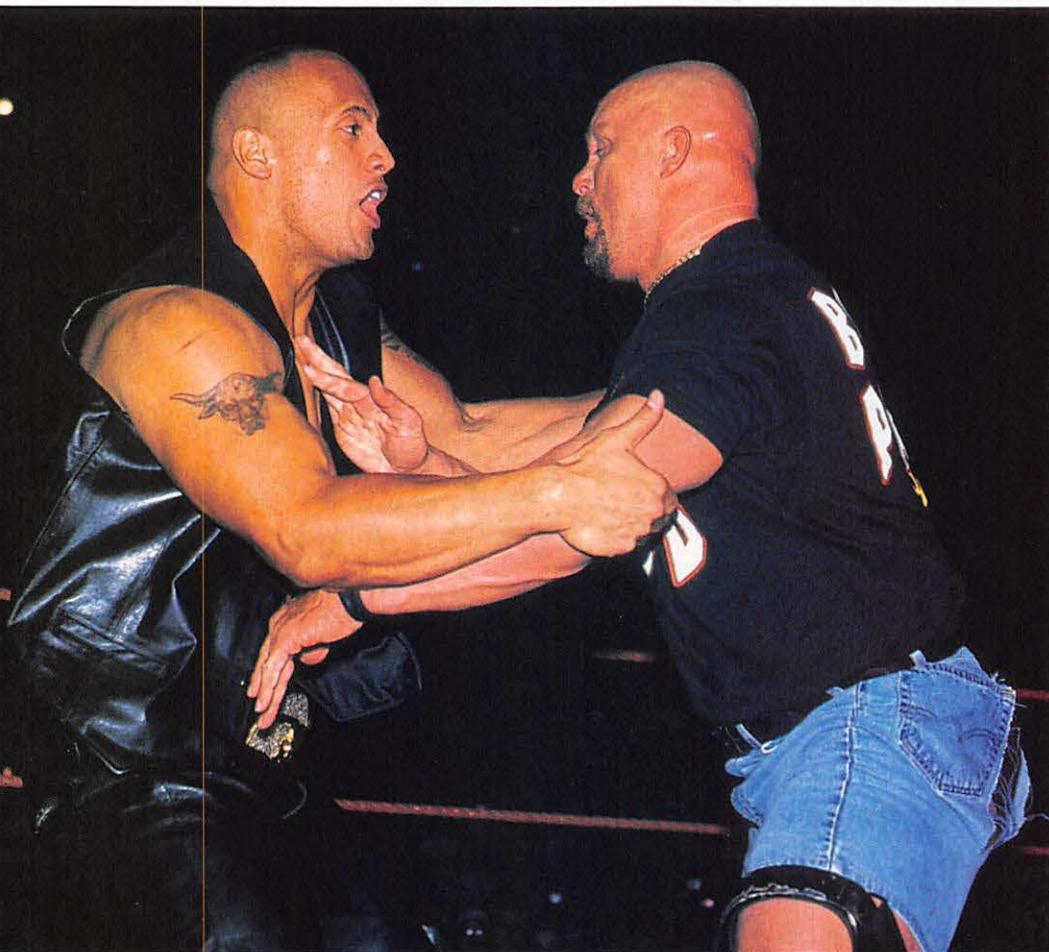
But all that was before so many WWE superstars began developing their own crossover appeal. Sure, Hogan and Roddy Piper made their marks, for better or worse, in Hollywood. But these days, The Rock, Triple-H, Steve Austin, Goldberg,

even Rob Van Dam and John Cena have made a splash in Tinseltown. The proliferation of "best of" DVDs and biographies has given these men star power that shines beyond the wrestling universe. They are household names.

As such, we've seen a decline in the use of so-called mainstream celebrities at WrestleMania. McMahon's thinking: WWE superstars have enough mainstream appeal to carry the show on their own.

However, McMahon's reliance on former and now-part-time superstars such as Austin, Rock, and Mick Foley to add punch to the WrestleMania card seems to belie any real confidence that his current roster members are capable of making it the spectacle it's supposed to be.

Publisher Stu Saks,
Managing Editor Dave



Chances are quite good that we will see both The Rock and Steve Austin at WrestleMania 21. Fans will no doubt love watching them again. But their appearances won't do a lot for WWE in the long run.

cle it's supposed to be.

Publisher Stu Saks, Managing Editor Dave Lenker, and Senior Writers Frank Krewda and Harry Burkett met recently to discuss the role they believe former high-profile superstars should have at WrestleMania.

STU SAKS: Just a few issues ago, some of us discussed the notion of letting the fans decide who participates at WrestleMania. Now the business at hand is discussing what role big-name, but rarely used, superstars should play in the card. There's a decent chance that The Rock, Mick Foley, Steve Austin, and Hulk Hogan will all have a role at WrestleMania 21, or at least two or three of the four. I guess I'll get the ball rolling by saying that I think WWE has an obligation to please its fans the best way it can. If that means bringing back The Rock or "Stone-Cold" for a one-shot deal, then so be it. These are the wrestlers people want to see, who they'll pay to see.

HARRY BURKETT: I agree. For years, WWE has held out WrestleMania as a special event, the granddaddy of them all. Operating on the premise that the WWE superstars are now big enough to carry the show, Vince McMahon must deliver no matter how he does it, and I don't see anything wrong with using established WWE superstars to do it, one-shot deal or not, especially if they're put in the ring with a current star.

FRANK KREWDA: I don't see anything wrong with delivering on a promise, or hype, whatever you want to call it. But I think both you guys are overlooking an important part of the equation: the message it sends to the WWE locker room. Wrestlers work all



Mick Foley and his mandible claw will likely be on hand at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on April 3, 2005. Some argue that his appearance and those of others of similar status is too predictable already.

year long with crazy gimmicks, feuds, and so on. Then an Austin or Rock, men who simply walked away from the company, are given a stage in the highest-profile matches of the year? I know that would kill my morale if I were a full-time WWE wrestler.

SAKS: Yes, but the men and women on the WWE roster are paid professionals. I think they have to accept the realities of the business. If Austin and Mick Foley generate more pay-per-view buys, they deserve the spots they're given. WrestleMania is about the fans, but it's also about making money. We all know the wrestling business isn't always fair, and there's some pressure to be a team player. If less accomplished wrestlers don't like it, maybe they should work harder to improve their performances. It's called paying your

dues being a team player; yes. But getting bumped for a wrestler who no longer really works for the company can have a negative effect on a guy, especially a talented, hard-working wrestler. Look at what happened two years ago. Rob Van Dam, maybe the most exciting wrestler on

"If Austin and Mick Foley generate more pay-per-view buys, they deserve the spots they're given. WrestleMania is about the fans, but it's also about making money ... If less accomplished wrestlers don't like it, maybe they should work harder to improve their performances."

—Stu Saks

DAVE LENKER: Paying your



What could WWE possibly do with Hulk Hogan (above left) at WrestleMania 21? We might find out in a few months. It would undoubtedly anger some people if he were given a top spot at 'Mania at the expense of, say, Rob Van Dam (above right).

On the same card, we got Austin-Rock and Hogan-McMahon. Van Dam seemed insulted, and I don't blame him. Nor do I think his career's been the same ever since.

KREWDA: Right. And who loses out? The fans do. Now imagine how far back Randy Orton's career would be set if Rock, Austin, and Hogan were to hog up the main event matches. These guys aren't on the road night after night like Orton.

BURKETT: Nor were they handed a golden opportunity like Orton was. And, in all fairness, Orton hasn't exactly lived up to all the hype just yet. If Orton progresses like WWE thinks he can, he'll have plenty of time in the WrestleMania spotlight.

LENKER: I'm not so sure about that. With Triple-H dominating the top bill the way he does, having these castaways walk into prime spots at WrestleMania only makes things harder on the Ortons and Van Dams.

Just look at how long it took for Chris Benoit and Eddie Guerrero to get the recognition they deserved.

KREWDA: And I'm not convinced the fans get what they want from these one-shot deals, either. Sure, the men we're talking about are good for a pop. But what then? Storylines are dropped the next night on *Raw* or shortly thereafter, and the guys who carry the company for most of the year are expected to jump back in and keep things exciting. That's tough. To me, the whole idea of bringing back an Austin or Hogan or Rock for 'Mania seems so transparent. It looks like the company is bringing them back just to cash in at WrestleMania. When it happens year after year, it doesn't seem so special anymore.

SAKS: I can understand that point, Frank. But I don't buy the notion that wrestlers' morale will take a big hit if the prodigal sons return in

time for WrestleMania. The more money these high-profile stars make for the company, the bigger everyone's share is.

KREWDA: Well, here's an analogy. Imagine we're doing a special issue of *INSIDE WRESTLING*, and management comes to you and says, "Stu, we love what you're doing, but since this is the most important issue of the year, we're going to bring one of our great editors from the past in and let him call the shots." Imagine how you'd feel if you were judged to be good enough to be the man for most of the year, but not when it counts most.

BURKETT: Nice analogy, Frank, but it doesn't hold up. As Stu and I already said, wrestlers on the undercard have an op-

portunity to perfect their craft and earn a top spot. If they don't do enough to unseat the big draws, they can't complain when the big draws get the best spots on the highest-profile show.

LENKER: Well, if we're going to talk about the business realities of the situation, we should start by acknowledging that getting a top spot at WrestleMania has little to do with hard work. I think McMahon's willingness to use certain wrestlers for their name recognition proves that point. If the whole deal was really about rewarding wrestlers for their effort, then "Hard Work" Bobby Walker would be the WWE World champ.

BURKETT: You're kidding, right? Bobby Walker isn't championship material. He never was.

LENKER: And neither are The Rock, Foley, Austin, or Hogan at this point. Yet they're put into championship-caliber positions at 'Mania just because of their names.

KREWDA: Which contradicts Vince's so-called belief that his superstars are good enough to carry the show. These part-timers are essentially filling the roles that celebrities used to fill.

SAKS: I don't see that as a contradiction. I see that more as McMahon's attempt to give WrestleMania the special feeling he hypes. To me, 'Mania was always more show than card. The surprises, hot-shots, and things of that nature are supposed to be what separates 'Mania from other WWE pay-per-views.

KREWDA: That's another debatable point, in my opinion. Without the mainstream celebrities, WrestleMania is no longer head and shoulders above the other pay-per-views. I know there's supposed to be a big buildup regarding storylines and all that, but can anyone tell me how it's been that much different from, say, SummerSlam? I think Vince has gone to the well once too often with Foley, who was supposed to be retired. Same thing with Austin and Hogan. Fortunately, The Rock has kept his hand in the game, so his antics are less predictable. The WWE might end up with a few more buys if word gets out these guys will show up at 'Mania, but I think the negatives outweigh the positives here. The message WWE is sending is that the biggest stars—the real stars—come out for the biggest show of the year. The rest of the year, you get the best of what we have today. Maybe that's why the buy rates for the pay-per-views after 'Mania have been so much lower.

BURKETT: I'm sure WWE sees it from a different perspective. That WrestleMania buy rate is golden to Vince McMahon, and he'll try to maximize it, negatives be damned. Stu raised an excellent point. When you strip away all the glitz and fanfare, the point of WrestleMania is to make money. Call me cynical, but ...

LENKER: Okay, Harry, you're cynical. But seriously, I think that view is shortsighted more than anything else. I think we can all agree that involving the people we've talked about is good for WrestleMania, but look at how the credibility of the product is compro-

mised when the stuff introduced at 'Mania ends with WrestleMania.

SAKS: I'll give you Rock vs. Hogan at WrestleMania X8. That match certainly created a lot of buzz.

LENKER: Yeah, until The Rock's departure and another one of Hogan's problems cropped up. Then the program fizzled.

SAKS: Then let me switch gears. If not the tried-and-true WWE superstars, what can Vince do to give WrestleMania the extra spice it needs to stand apart from the rest of the company's programming.

BURKETT: Signing Sting wouldn't be a bad idea, providing he's interested in going there.

KREWDA: No question. He's been out of the spotlight for a while. But he's a big name with a loyal following, and his maiden voyage in WWE would create some excitement. Besides, they'd probably have to give him more than a one-and-done deal, so he'd be around for a while. Then again, what message that sends the young up-and-comers, I don't know.

LENKER: And there's always the question of how they'd handle a former WCW champion. Remember how they mishandled Goldberg? I see nothing to suggest WWE learned its lesson. Maybe that alone would be interesting enough to make this 'Mania more compelling. □



One part-timer might want to look into using at WrestleMania 21 is Sting. He has acknowledged that he almost made a deal to appear at WrestleMania before. He'd at least be a fresh part-timer from the past.

Photo By Bob Payes

APRIL HUNTER

HEIGHT: 5'10"

WEIGHT: 150

HOMETOWN: Philadelphia, PA

GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE:
Winning the 2003 WXW Elite 8
Tournament

SHE DOES IT SO WELL:

Overpowering her female (and sometimes male, as she has co-held several men's tag team titles with Slyk Wagner Brown) opponents. She's just so strong

WHERE SHE NEEDS TO IMPROVE: Polishing her overall game. April has the size, look, and basic ability to be a star in this sport. She just needs to work on the finer details. A stint in OVW would do her so much good

PET FINISHER: HeadHunter (neckbreaker off the top rope)

BIGGEST TEST TO DATE:

Surviving several tours of Japan for Arsion—where the training sessions are more grueling than most could ever imagine

OUTLOOK FOR 2005: She should continue to pull ahead of the pack of independent women wrestlers. It really could be a breakout year for this well-traveled diva

QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS:

"April Hunter is one of the toughest and most determined females out there today. If she continues her dominance, who knows how far she'll go."

—Afa the Wild Samoan



data sheet

ROSEY

HEIGHT: 6'5"

WEIGHT: 360

HOMETOWN: Pensacola, FL

GREATEST MOMENT TO DATE:

"They've been very few and very far between in the last year, so we'll go back to September 2002, when me and Three Minute Warning partner Jamal (with Eric Bischoff) disrupted the Billy and Chuck commitment ceremony in memorably violent fashion."

HE DOES IT SO WELL:

Overpowers opponents.

Unfortunately, he's only been able to do it in brief bursts.

WHERE HE NEEDS TO IMPROVE: His stamina will need to improve as he intends to go solo. He ought to ditch the hideous superhero gimmick as well.

PET FINISHER: Modified sidewalk slam.

BIGGEST TEST TO DATE:

Adjusting to life in WWE after Jamal was fired. They looked like they could be a dominant team when they arrived and perhaps one of the Raw tag divisions cornerstones for years to come. It wasn't to be, and it's been a struggle for Rosey ever since.

He *must* find the right persona.

OUTLOOK FOR 2005: It's so hard to take a man who looks like he's wearing pajamas in the ring seriously, especially a man as big as Rosey. With Hurricane apparently turning heel, we look for Rosey to reinvent himself as a rougher, more aggressive wrestler, and also as a heel. Making a run at the I-C title isn't out of the question, though it might be a longshot.

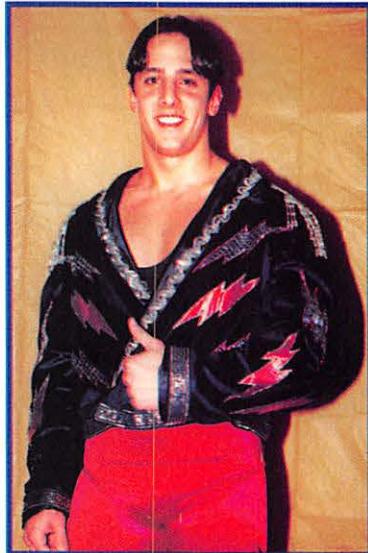
QUICKIE EXPERT ANALYSIS:

"Since Three Minute Warning broke up and his alliance with The Hurricane stalled, you can tell Rosey really lacks confidence. If he could string together a few wins, I think you'd see his real talent emerge. It's all about confidence."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter



wrestling timeline



1994:

After completing his training under Wild Samoan Afa, Kidman makes his wrestling debut. He competes on the independent circuit mostly under the name Kid Flash.

1996:

Kidman begins competing for WCW, frequently wrestling in preliminary matches televised on *WCW Saturday Night*. He often competes in cruiserweight bouts, but is unable to land many high-profile matches.

MAY 11, 1974:

Billy Kidman is born in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

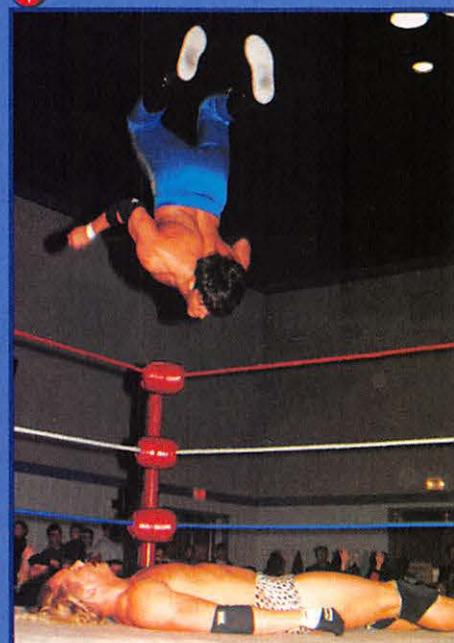
SEPTEMBER 1995:

As Kid Flash, Kidman teams with Ace Darling to win the ECWA tag team title.



FEBRUARY 22, 1997:

Kidman competes in the inaugural ECWA Super 8 Tournament, defeating Reckless Youth in the opening round before falling to Cheetah Master in the semifinals. His old tag team partner Darling wins the tournament.



Billy Kidman

Inside Wrestling journeys back in time to examine the career of a superstar who has left a major imprint on the sport

FALL 1997:

Raven recruits Kidman into his bizarre heel group called The Flock, a stable that includes Stevie Richards, Perry Saturn, Van Hammer, and others. The clean-cut Kidman undergoes a metamorphosis, growing his hair longer and wearing dirty, tattered, grunge-style clothes.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1998:

Kidman gets revenge on Guerrero by beating the Luchador to win the cruiserweight title. Kidman's seven-year itch shooting star press becomes one of wrestling's most talked-about maneuvers.

DECEMBER 27, 1998:

Helps get the Starrcade PPV off to an exciting start by defeating Guerrero and Rey Misterio Jr. in a thrilling three-way match.

JULY 12, 1998:

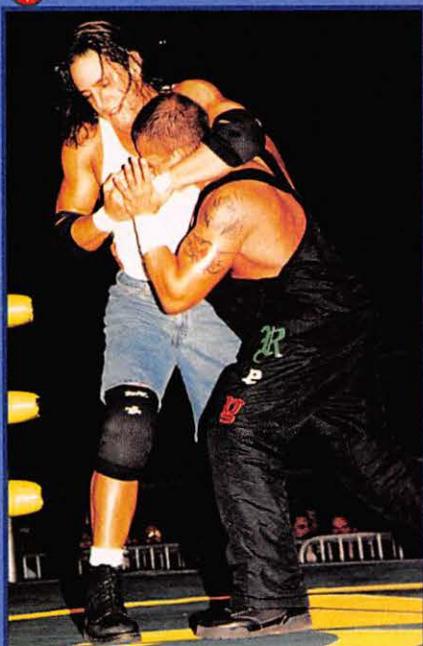
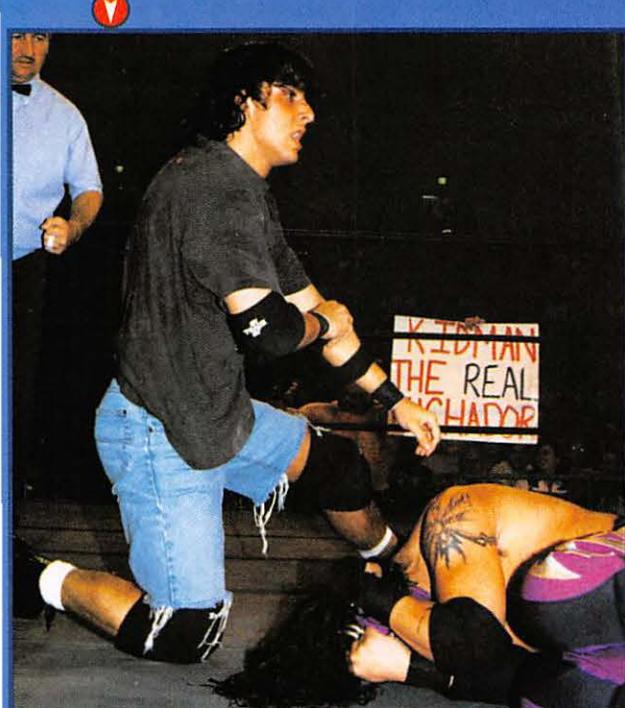
After two years in WCW, Kidman gets his first pay-per-view singles match at Bash at the Beach. Kidman is beaten by Juventud Guerrero.

NOVEMBER 16, 1998:

Drops the title back to Guerrero, but regains the championship six days later at the World War III pay-per-view.

JANUARY 17, 1999:

Just weeks after suffering a torn groin and rotator cuff injuries, Kidman wins the biggest match of his career, beating Psicosis, Rey Misterio Jr., and Juventud Guerrero in a four-corners match at the Souled Out PPV.



wrestling timeline

MARCH 29, 1999:

Cruiserweight rivals can make pretty good partners, too. Kidman and Misterio pair up to beat Chris Benoit and Dean Malenko for the WCW World tag team title in Toronto.

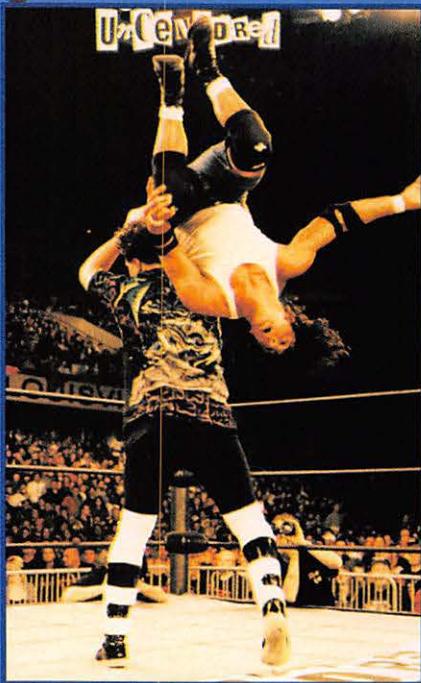


OCTOBER 24, 1999:

Teams with Konnan against Hugh Morrus (Bill DeMott) and Brian Knobs and Harlem Heat in a three-way match for the vacant World tag title at Halloween Havoc that is ultimately won by Booker T and Stevie Ray.

MARCH 14, 1999:

Continues his string of exciting and successful cruiserweight title defenses by beating former ECW heavyweight champion Mikey Whipwreck at Uncensored. The following night, he drops the belt to Rey Misterio Jr.



APRIL 11, 1999:

Loses to partner/rival Misterio in a cruiserweight title match at Spring Stampede.

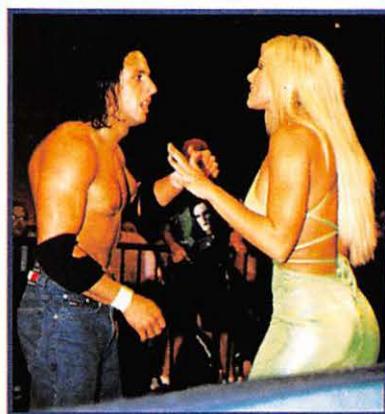
SUMMER 1999:

After Kidman and Misterio drop the belts to Saturn and Raven on May 9, Kidman begins hanging around a lot with Misterio and Konnan. They begin calling themselves The Filthy Animals and later add others to the clique.



SEPTEMBER 12, 1999:

Kidman, Misterio, and Eddie Guerrero defeat Vampiro and The Insane Clown Posse in a six-man match at Fall Brawl. They had also defeated the same trio a month earlier at Road Wild.



► JANUARY 2000:

Kidman is one of a handful of WCW wrestlers to request his release from the company when head writer Vince Russo is demoted and Kevin Sullivan is named head booker. After negotiating further with the company, Kidman agrees to remain with WCW, and takes on fellow Filthy Animal Torrie Wilson as his regular valet.



► MARCH 19, 2000:

Teams with old Harlem Heat rival Booker T to defeat Harlem Heat 2000 (Stevie Ray and Big T—the former Ahmed Johnson) at Uncensored.

► APRIL 10, 2000:

Kidman and Wilson join Vince Russo's heel New Blood faction during a special edition of *Nitro*.

OCTOBER 25, 1999:

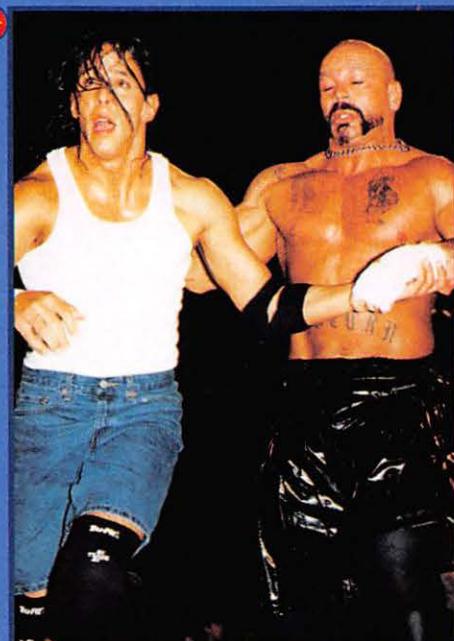
Kidman and Konnan win the WCW World tag title from Harlem Heat on *Nitro*. The Animals hold the belts for one month before losing them to Creative Control (Don and Ron Harris).

JANUARY 16, 2000:

A feud between The Filthy Animals and the Shane Douglas-led Revolution faction escalates as Kidman defeats The Revolution's Perry Saturn in a bunkhouse brawl.

MARCH 30, 2000:

Kidman's third cruiserweight title reign lasts a mere one day, as he wins the belt from The Artist Formerly Known as Prince Iaukea and loses the belt back to him the following night.



wrestling timeline



MAY 7, 2000:

A flippant comment by Hulk Hogan ignites an unlikely war. Shortly after Hogan dismisses Kidman as someone who should be wrestling at small-time "flea markets," the two face off in a surprisingly intense bout at Slamboree.

JUNE 11, 2000:

Hogan beats Kidman in a rematch at The Great American Bash. The following night, he is named referee for a World title match between Hogan and Jeff Jarrett, which he calls down the middle, indicating a babyface turn.

SEPTEMBER 17, 2000:

Kidman recruits Madusa as his teammate and takes Wilson and Shane Douglas in the first-ever (and probably last) intergender scaffold match at Fall Brawl. Douglas and Wilson win the forgettable bout.

JUNE 5, 2000:

Apparently, Torrie Wilson was a Hulkamaniac. Torrie turns against Kidman, delivering a low blow to her boyfriend, later hooking up with Shane Douglas.



MARCH 26, 2001:

On the final edition of *Nitro*, Kidman and Mysterio team up to win the ill-fated WCW cruiserweight tag title, beating Elix Skipper and Kid Romeo. He signs with the WWF when Vince McMahon purchases WCW.





JULY 3, 2001:

Defeats Gregory "Shane" Helms to win his fourth WCW cruiserweight title on an episode of *Smackdown*.

JULY 30, 2001:

X-Pac beats Kidman for the cruiserweight title on *Raw* in Philadelphia.

OCTOBER 22, 2001:

Drops the cruiserweight title to Tajiri.

JULY 22, 2001:

Kidman scores one for WCW on the WWF Invasion PPV, beating WWF light heavyweight champion X-Pac in a non-title WCW champion vs. WWF champion bout.

OCTOBER 9, 2001:

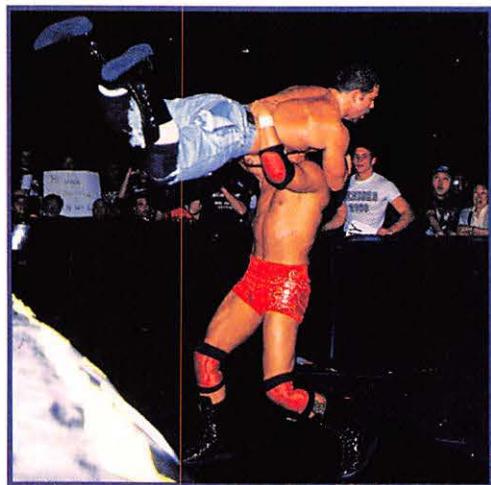
Wins the unified cruiserweight/light heavyweight title with an impressive triumph over X-Pac.

APRIL 2, 2002:

Wins his sixth cruiserweight title by defeating Tajiri. Tajiri, however, regains the belt less than three weeks later.



wrestling timeline



JULY 21, 2002:

New cruiserweight champ Jamie Noble turns aside Kidman's challenge by pinning him at Vengeance.

NOVEMBER 17, 2002:

Kidman wins his seventh cruiserweight title by pinning Noble at Survivor Series.

JULY 11, 2003:

Kidman marries *Playboy* cover girl Wilson (for real) in Old Saybrook, Connecticut.

OCTOBER 26, 2002:

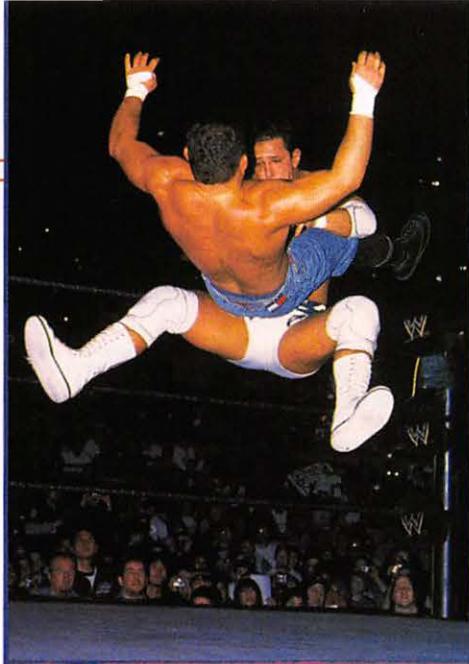
Teams with Torrie Wilson to beat John Cena and Dawn Marie in a special intergender tag match at the U.K.-only Rebellion pay-per-view.



FEBRUARY 23, 2003:

Mattitude proves to be Kidman's undoing. He loses the cruiserweight title to Matt Hardy at No Way Out.





JULY 27, 2003:

The Filthy Animals reunite at Vengeance, but this time they fall short in their bid to capture gold. Kidman and Mysterio lose to Smackdown tag team champions Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas.

MARCH 14, 2004:

After two years in WWE, Kidman finally gets a slot on WrestleMania, competing in the cruiserweight open match that is ultimately won by reigning champ Chavo Guerrero Jr.

OCTOBER 3, 2004:

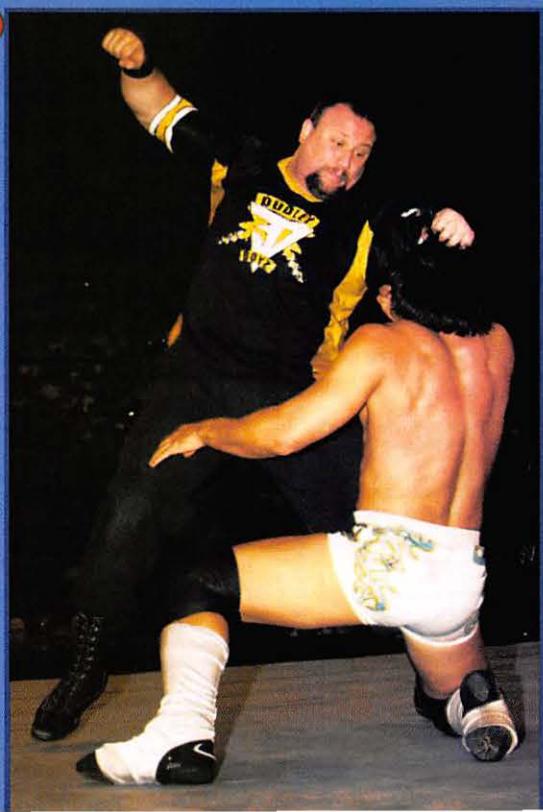
Kidman defeats London in a battle of the shooting star presses in an exciting grudge match at No Mercy. Following the match, Kidman hits a second shooting star press on London while his former partner is strapped to a medical backboard.

JANUARY 24, 2004:

Kidman and Charlie Haas are inducted into the ECWA Hall of Fame.

JULY 6, 2004:

Kidman and Paul London win the Smackdown tag team title by upsetting The Dudley Boyz in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The London/Kidman pairing would be short-lived, however, as Kidman's trepidation over using the shooting star press (after giving Chavo Guerrero Jr. a severe concussion with a botched one) causes them to lose the title just two months later.



INSIDE Wrestling BACK ISSUES

April 1978: What Bob Backlund Can Learn From Bruno Sammartino. Also: Rick Steamboat, Bruiser, Superstar Graham, Ric Flair.

Dec. 1978: The Shattered Dreams Of Dusty Rhodes. Also: Mr. Wrestling II, Dino Bravo, Flair-Steambat, Bruno Sammartino.

April 1979: The Terrible Pain Ric Flair Causes Dusty Rhodes. Also: Andre the Giant, Backlund-Mavia, Paul Jones, converted rulebreakers.

Aug. 1980: Larry Zbyszko's Foolproof Plot To Drive Bruno Out Of Wrestling. Also: Bobby Heenan, Mr. Wrestling II, Ox Baker.

September 1980: Will The Fans Hate The New Dusty Rhodes? Also: Mascaras-Sicodelico, Larry Zbyszko, Ladd-Strongbow, Hussein Arab.

Nov. 1980: Zbyszko vs. Putski: From Brotherly Love To Brutal Hatred. Also: Nick Bockwinkel, Dusty Rhodes, The Assassin, Koloff & Volkoff.

Jan. 1981: Race vs. Backlund: Did The WWF Trick Harley Race? Also: Pedro Morales, Snuka & Stevens, Strongbow-Sheik, Dick Stater.

April 1981: Bruno Sammartino Jr. Confesses: "It's Hell Carrying The Name Of My Father." Also: Bugsy McGraw, Capt. Lou Albano, Mongolian Stomper, Flair-Race.

May 1981: Hussein Arab vs. Ivan Koloff: A Bloody War Explodes In A Neutral Country. Also: Bob Backlund, Bolo Brazil, Santana & Bravo, David Von Erich-Race.

Sept. 1981: Patera & The Freebirds: The Unholy Alliance Seeks To Cripple Ted DiBiase. Also: Junkyard Dog, Dory Funk Jr., Killer Khan, Ivan Koloff.

March 1982: Backlund-Valentine Death Match: The WWF Title Is Back Where It Belongs. Also: Austin Idol, Spoiler, Tommy Rich, Bisco-Dibiase.

April 1982: "Only Dusty Rhodes Can Save The AWA From Nick Bockwinkel," By Verne Gagne. Also: David Von Erich, Blackjacks, Masked Superstar & Super Destroyer, Andre-Khan.

May 1982: Adrian Adonis: "I Can Beat Bob Backlund ... I Just Can't Beat The System!" Also: Dusty Rhodes, Flair & Mr. Wrestling II, D. Von Erich-M. Graham, Hogan-Blackwell.

June 1982: Blackjack Mulligan Jr.'s Tragic Story: "I Have No Father ... I Have No Friends!" Also: Sgt. Slaughter, Morales-Valentine, Montreal, Super Destroyer & Masked Superstar.

Aug. 1982: Is Andre The Giant Getting Too Big For Wrestling? Also: Nick Bockwinkel, Mil Mascaras, Backlund-Mulligan Sr., Studd-Super Destroyer.

Oct. 1982: Roddy Piper: "I Don't Have To Cheat To Defeat Tommy Rich." Also: James J. Dillon, Andre-Mulligan Sr., Pat Patterson, Magnificent Muraco.

Nov. 1982: Ric Flair—Wrestling's Most Versatile Champion. Also: Hansen & Anderson, Mulligan-Windham, Jimi Snuka.

Dec. 1982: Andre vs. Mulligan: The Giant Is Mightier Than The Claw. Also: Grand Wizard, Jerry Lawler, Rich-Heenan, Jack Brisco.

March 1983: Superstar Graham: "The Hell With Pedro—I Want Backlund!" Also: Terry Funk, Rocky Johnson, JYD-Gino Hernandez, John Studd.

April 1983: Ivan Koloff vs. Ken Patera: The Shocking Truth Behind The Battle Of The Titans. Also: Albano-Snuka, Kabuki, Tommy Rich.

June 1983: Bob Backlund vs. John Studd: The Untold Story Behind Studd's Raw Deal. Also: Jim Garvin, Bockwinkel-Lawler, Bob Orton Jr.

Sept. 1983: Zbyszko vs. Rich: Can The National Title Survive This Brutal Tug Of War? Also: Andre-Kamala, Piper-Valentine, Michael Hayes.

Nov. 1983: We Sent Hulk Hogan To Cover Bockwinkel vs. Wahoo ... And All Hell Broke Loose! Also: James J. Dillon, Race-Kevin Von Erich, Paul Ellering, Reed-JYD.

April 1984: Rick Steamboat Quits Wrestling! The Real Story Behind His Most Painful Decision. Also: Masked Superstar-Mulligan, Adams-Garvin, Barry Windham, Ric Flair.

June 1984: Ric Flair On The Defensive: Is Mike Rotundo Ready To Take The NWA Title? Also: Ted DiBiase, Jim Comette, Angelo Mosca Jr.

July 1984: Ric Flair Brings The World Title To The New York Area: A Night Of Champions At The Meadowlands. Also: Martel-Bravo, Mr. Wrestling II, Jumbo Tsuruta.

Aug. 1984: Junkyard Dog Joins Jim Valiant's Boogie Woogie Brigade. Also: Steve O'Zbyszko, Magnum-Wrestling II, Austin Idol, Sugar-Spoiler.

Sept. 1984: Rich Martel Dethrones Jumbo Tsuruta: Finally, An AWA Champion To Be Proud Of. Also: Brody-LeDuc, Iron Sheik, Jerry Von Erich, Rock 'n' Roll Express.

Oct. 1984: Collision Of The Florida Musclemen: Can Billy Jack Squeeze Superstar Graham Out Of Wrestling? Also: Road Warriors, Flair-Steamboat, Eddie Gilbert, Ondorf & Shultz-Atlas & Johnson.

Nov. 1984: Dusty Rhodes: Champion Of Cham-

pions ... And Still The Lord Of The Ring. Also: Rich-Gilbert, Gino Hernandez, Road Warriors, JYD-Reed.

Dec. 1984: How Hulkamania Trampled Big John Studd. Also: Road Warriors, Magnum T.A., Wahoo McDaniel, Sullivan-Rhodes.

March 1985: He's Back And Better Than Ever: Backlund-A-Mania Is Sweeping The Nation! Also: Koloff, Billy Jack, Von Erichs-Destitution Inc.

June 1985: Sgt. Slaughter Tops Ric Flair—So Why Isn't He Champion? Also: Ellering & Road Warriors, Koloff & Khrushchev-Von Erichs, Kevin Von Erich, Andre & JYD.

Sept. 1985: A Psychologist Examines "Rowdy" Roddy Piper! Is He As Crazy As You Think He Is? Also: Magnum-Blanchard, Fantastics, Ric Flair, Gagne & Sammartino.

Jan. 1986: Rick Steamboat vs. Magnificent Muraco: The Volcano Rumbles. Also: Warriors & Ellering, Mike Von Erich, Jake Roberts, Koloff & Khrushchev-Rock 'n' Rolls.

March 1986: Barry Windham & Mike Rotundo: Will Their Reunion Spell Disaster For Kendall Windham? Also: Studd-Hillbilly, Rick Rude, Jerry Lawler, Russians-Road Warriors.

April 1986: Starrcade's Over, But The Feud Rages On: Dusty Rhodes And Ric Flair Cannot Survive '86! Also: Andre-Heenan, Bill Watts, Scott Hall, Lance Von Erich.

June 1986: Barry Windham's NWA Mission: Humiliate Ric Flair! Also: Nord-Road Warriors, British Bulldogs, L. Von Erich-One Man Gang, Tully Blanchard.

July 1986: All-American Special Issue: Sgt. Slaughter, Hulk Hogan, Magnum T.A. Also: Ivan Koloff, Rude-Lance Von Erich.

Aug. 1986: WrestleMania 2: Hulk Hogan's Night Of Redemption. Also: Jim & Ron Garvin, Steve Williams, Rick Martel, Sir Oliver Humperdinck.

Sept. 1986: Dusty Rhodes & Magnum T.A.: America's Team Is Not Out For Glory ... It's Out For Revenge! Also: Andre-Hogan, Chris Adams, Barry Windham, Scott Hall.

Oct. 1986: The NWA Championship Sinks To A New Low: Ric Flair Needs 10 Thugs To Defeat Lex Luger! Also: Road Warriors, Randy Savage, Verne Gagne, Fantastics-Shepherders.

Nov. 1986: Paul Ellering's Own Story: "How My Road Warriors Made Dusty Rhodes NWA Champion." Also: Adams-Rude, British Bulldogs, Bockwinkel-Hansen, Bill Watts.

Dec. 1986: Rock 'n' Roll Revival: Morton And Gibson Regain The NWA World Tag Title! Also: Lex Luger, Hogan-Adonis, Hall-DeBeers, Baby Doll.

Jan. 1987: The New Roddy Piper: Why The Fans Love Him ... But Why They Should Hate Him! Also: Terry Taylor, Magnum T.A., Rude-Flair, Bam Bam Bigelow.

Feb. 1987: Hogan, Piper, Orndorf: The WWF's Hate Triangle. Also: Terry Taylor, Ric Flair, Midnight Rockers, Kevin Von Erich.

March 1987: Happy Anniversary, Hulk Hogan! The WWF Champion Celebrates Three Years At The Top. Also: Ric Flair, Missy-Gilbert, Lex Luger, Bulldogs, Koloffs.

April 1987: Starrcade '87: Saddle The Horsemen And Trample Lex Luger! Also: Roddy Piper, Adams & Taylor, Bruiser Brody, Scott Hall.

July 1987: Exclusive Ringside Reports: WrestleMania III Makes History! Also: Midnight Rockers, Mike Rotundo, Danny Davis, Ted DiBiase.

Aug. 1987: The Superpowers' Super Victory: Dusty Rhodes & Nikita Koloff Win The Crockett Cup. Also: Hulk Hogan, Lane & Comette, Mike Von Erich, Adams & Taylor.

Sept. 1987: Hulk Hogan Defeats Harley Race: How Fate Took The Greatness Out Of This Violent Feud. Also: New Breed-R&R Express, Rich & Idol, Honky Tonk Man, Eddie Gilbert.

Oct. 1987: The Rock 'n' Roll Express Win Their Fourth NWA Title. Also: Hogan-Bigelow, Rhodes-Blanchard, scaffold, Kevin Sullivan.

Nov. 1987: Special Fan Poll: Should Mr. T Be Allowed To Refer? Also: New Breed-R&R Express, Rich & Dwayne, Honky Tonk Man, Eddie Gilbert.

Dec. 1987: Rhodes Challenges Luger: Will Dusty's U.S. Title Hopes Split The Superpowers? Also: Hubs-Bubba, Magnum T.A., Randy Savage, Al Perez.

Jan. 1988: Is Hulk Hogan Bored With The NWA Title? Also: R&Rs-Horsemen, Flair-R. Garvin, Adrian Adonis, Steve Williams.

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Also: Paul E. Dangerously, Chris Adams, Steiners, Lawyer-T. Funk.

Feb. 1991: Our Plan For The "Hulkster" To Regain The WWF World Belt. Also: Terry Taylor, Rick Martel, Sting & Simmons, all-annoying, Stan Hansen.

March 1991: The Earthquake Feud Rumbles On: Will Hulk Hogan Be The Victim Of His Own Deadly Obsession? Also: Roberts-Martel, Sting-Hansen, Keirn-Perez, Barry Windham.

April 1991: The Steiners: They'd Be Wrestling's Greatest Tag Team, But ... Also: Eddie Gilbert, Flair-Sting, Steiners, Roddy Piper, Larry Zbyszko, Sgt. Slaughter.

May 1991: Savage vs. Warrior: The Bloodlust Of Ex-Champions. Also: Steiners, Sting, Virgil, D. Sammartino-I. Koloff.

June 1991: Steiners, LOD: Tag Team Thunder. Also: Steve Williams, Nikita Koloff, I-C belt, Dundees, Am Anderson.

July 1991: Hogan's Burning Mad! Beating Slaughter For The Title Was Not Enough. Also: Virgil, Nastys, Steiners, Dan Spivey, Terry Funk.

Aug. 1991: Are The Steiners Getting Too Cocky For Their Own Good? Also: Jerry Lawler, Rick Steamboat, Warrior-Undertaker, Dustin Rhodes, Flair-Windham.

Sept. 1991: Justice Is In The WWF ... And Hogan's In The Biggest Trouble Of His Life! Also: Missy-Paul E., Rick Rude, Curt Hennig, Stevie Ray, Diamond Exchange.

Oct. 1991: Exclusive Preview & Analysis: SummerSlam '91. Also: Savage & Liz, Hogan & Warrior, Leg Luger, Santana-Atlas, Steve Williams, Studd-Zenk.

Nov. 1991: Our Investigation Reveals ... The Truth Behind The Hogan-Savage Connection. Also: Lex Luger, Ric Flair, War Games, Mounties, foreign objects.

Dec. 1991: A Night To Remember: SummerSlam Provides Heat For The Cold Months Ahead. Also: Alexandra York, Simmons-Luger, Lane & Comette, Leatherface.

Jan. 1992: INSIDE WRESTLING Reveals: Sting's Memo From A Maniac! Also: Freebirds, Blackhearts, Bret Hart, Dusty Rhodes, Mike Rotundo.

Feb. 1992: A Reign Of Pain: Lex Luger—The Agony Of A World Champion. Also: Bret Hart, Patriot, Rick Rude, Enforcers, Thesz & Rogers.

March 1992: Who's Winning The Hogan-Flair Wars? Also: Steiners, Survivor Series, Enforcers-Rhodes & Steamboat, Johnny B. Badd.

May 1992: War! WrestleMania Will Be Held And Hulk's Battleground. Also: Justin Liger, Eddie Gilbert, Repo Man, Austin-Blossom, Triple State & UWF.

June 1992: Sting: A New Champion, A New Era. Also: Hulk Hogan, Harley Race, Marcus Bagwell, Tony Atlas, IRS & DiBiase.

July 1992: Is Regaining The WWF Title An Impossible Undertaking? Also: Sherri & Shawn, Big Van Vader, Gordy & Williams, Kamala, Joe Savoldi.

Aug. 1992: The Closer Flair Gets ... The More Savage "Macho Man" Becomes. Also: Jack-Badd, Brian Christopher, LOD & Ellering, Taylor & Valentine, Dusty Wolfe.

Sept. 1992: Hulk Hogan's "Retirement": Why The WWF Will Never Let Him Rest In Peace. Also: War Games, Big Van Vader, Kamala, Marty Jannetty, U.K.

Oct. 1992: SummerSlam '92: Exclusive Preview & Analysis. Also: S. Steiner-Muta, Ron Simmons, Eddie Gilbert, Eric Embry.

Nov. 1992: The Great American Crash: Vader Crushes Sting For The WCW World Title. Also: Ric Flair, Ultimate Warrior, Madusa, Warlord & Barbarian-Bushwhackers, top rope rule.

Dec. 1992: Hey, Ric Flair: Stop Whining And Start Winning. Also: Razor Ramon, Heavenly Bodies, Jeff Jarrett, Windham & D. Rhodes, NWL title.

March 1993: Who Controls The Balance Of Power In The WWF? Also: Shawn Michaels, Nikita Koloff, Windham-Dustin, Survivor Series, Rod Price.

April 1993: New Blood! The Wrestlers Who Could Revitalize The WWF In '93. Also: Z-Man & Gunn, Sting-Vader, Dangerous Alliance, Ric Flair.

May 1993: Exclusive WrestleMania IX Match Analysis. Also: Andre the Giant, Pillman & Austin, Great Muta, Headshrinkers-Steiners, 2 Cold Scorpio.

Jan. 1994 (Special Edition): Wrestling's Seasonal Spectaculars—WWF SummerSlam, WCW Fall Brawl. Also: Rick Martel, Razor Ramon, Steven Regal, Paul Ondorf, Mascaras-Liger, ECW baseball bat matches.

Feb. 1994: Our Holiday Wish List For 1994. Also: Hogan-Savage-Bret, Hacksaw Duggan, Doink, Hollywood Blonds, Steven Regal.

April 1994 (Special Issue): The INSIDE WRESTLING

Computer Tournament. Also: Lex Luger, Starrcade, Yoko-Fuji, Ric Flair, Curt Hennig, Funk-Sabu. **May 1994: Lex Luger & Bret Hart: Their Greatest Triumphs, Their Greatest Tragedies.** Also: Flair-Rude, Rick Morton, Heenan-Blockwinkel, Brian Christopher, Yoko-Booger.

June 1994: Wake Up, Rick Steamboat: Ric Flair Is Still "Slick" Ric! Also: Jimmy Snuka, Tony Anthony, IRS, Bruise Brothers, Alundra Blayne, Freebirds.

July 1994 (Special Issue): A Look Into Wrestling's Future: You Won't Believe What You'll See! Also: Ron Simmons, Sting, Earthquake-Booger, Bob Armstrong, Diesel.

Oct. 1994 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Doink, Vader-Race, Mabel, Dory Funk Jr., Owen-Bret, Hall of Fame.

March 1995: Predictions 1995. Also: Nastys, Razor Ramon, Tasmaniac, Kid-Man O' War, Pillman & Hogan.

June 1995: The Beginning Of The End? Will Hulk Hogan Get Burned By Friendly Fire? Also: Steve Austin, Gangstas, Public Enemy, Bret-Owen, Jeff Jarrett.

Oct. 1995 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Randy Savage, Bret & Cactus, Sting, Diesel, Hawk.

Nov. 1995: One Defense In Four Months?! Strip Hulk Hogan Of The Title—Now! Also: Alex Wright, Tatanka, King of Ring, Chris Benoit, Backlund-Clinton.

Jan. 1996: Our Holiday Wish List For 1996! Also: Scott Norton, Sid Vicious, Pscisico-Misterio, Barry Horowitz, Sabu.

Feb. 1996: Wrestling's Top Stars: What 1996 Has In Store For Them! Also: Goldust, Sherri-Parker, Mikey Whiplreck, Smokin' Gunns.

March 1996: His Excellency! How Bret Mysterio Died! Also: Diesel's Execution. Also: Jeff Jarrett, Giant, Jim Cornette, Survivor Series, Eddie Guerrero.

June 1996: Luger Or Hogan? If Sting Makes The Wrong Choice, He's Through! Also: Road Warriors, Roddy Piper, Ahmed Johnson, Raven, Al Snow

Aug. 1996: The Greening Of Wrestling: How Sting & Shawn Will Become \$50,000,000 Men! Also: Bodydonna, Giant, Guerrera-Misterio, George Steele, Goldust & Marlena.

Oct. 1996 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Jake Roberts, Yokozuna, Giant-Konnack, Ahmed Johnson, Chris Jericho, strutters.

Nov. 1996: The Steiners: Feasting On A Buffet Of Violence. Also: Shawn Michaels, Sabu-Douglas, King of Ring, Eddie Guerrero, truck stop terror.

Dec. 1996: Three Women For Four Horsemen? The Hot Search For A Fourth Filly Has Begun! Also: Sunny & Gunns, Giant, Goldust, Cornette & Hart, Jerry Jarrett.

Holiday 1996 (Special Issue): The Tombstone: Wrestling's Deadliest Finisher! Also: 1997 calendar, "Psycho" Sid, Benoit-Misterio, Steiners-NWO, Pit Bull, Lushin Liger.

Feb. 1997: Trouble In Egoville: Is There An NWO Within The NWO? Also: Chris Candido, Bret-Shawn, Ric Flair, Joey Styles, Liger-Benoit.

June 1997: Ahmed Johnson Reveals: "I Almost Joined The Nation Of Domination." Also: Mankind, Lex Luger, NWO, Davey Boy Smith, Jerry Graham.

Oct. 1997 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: LOD-PG-13, Rob Van Dam, Flair & Horsemen, Ken Shamrock, McMichael-White, Madd & Mama Maxine.

Nov. 1997: WWF War Zone: Interfederation Battles Rock The Sport! Also: Ahmed Johnson, Curt Hennig, Nueva World Order, Chris Candido, Dan Severn.

Dec. 1997: Losing Is Bull! Has Dennis Rodman Had It With Hulk Hogan? Also: Steve Austin, Jarrett & Debra, Harts, Funk-France, Chris Jericho, Holiday 1997 (Special Issue): The Steiners' Million-Dollar Gamble!

Also: 1998 calendar, Alex Wright, The Patriot, Sgt. Slaughter, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards.

Jan. 1998: Our Holiday Wish List For The Stars (Sable). Also: Bret Hart, Rey Mysterio Jr., Steve Austin, Roddy Piper, Fritz Von Erich.

Feb. 1998: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For '98. Also: Brian Pillman, Sting, Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Reckless Youth.

March 1998: Hart Transplant! The Truth Behind Bret's Defection To WCW. Also: Steve McMichael, Bam Bam Bigelow, Steve Austin, Disco Inferno.

April 1998 (Special Issue): The 1998 INSIDE WRESTLING Computer Tournament. Also: Scott Hall, Marlena, Chris Benoit, Gunn & James, Sabu-Sandman.

May 1998: Is The WWF Screwing Another Hart? Also: Steve Austin, Dallas Page, Booker T, Larry Zbysko, Al Snow.

June 1998: Exclusive! Steve Austin: The 10 Men Who Inspired His Toughness. Also: Dusty & Dustin, Perry Saturn, Mortis, Jeff Jarrett.

July 1998 (Special Issue): Top Stars Answer Your Personal Questions. Also: Jericho-Misterio Jr., Steve Austin, Sunny, Scott Steiner, Christopher-Michinoku.

Aug. 1998: WrestleMania XIV: The Real Winners & Losers. Also: Sunny, Curt Hennig, Dan Severn, Ultimo Dragon.

Sept. 1998: Power Surge! While The NWO Fiddles ... These Men Are Burning. Also: Sable, Ultimo-Guerrero, DeGeneration X-Owen, Rocky Maivia, Mad Russian-Rambo.

Oct. 1998 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Steve Austin, Taka Michinoku, Al Snow, Hollywood Hogan, Roddy Piper, Misawa-Kawada.

Nov. 1998: Austin vs. Goldberg: Who Would Win And Why? Also: Bret Hart, Dude Love, Junkyard Dog, Helmsley-Michaels, Ray-Booker.

Dec. 1998: DDP's Big Bang Theories: Cutting Loose On Life, Love, & The Ultimate Buzz. Also: Sabo-Jackie, Mankind, Hogan-Horace, D-Lo, APW.

Holiday 1998 (Special Issue): Kane: Still Haunted By His Day Of Glory. Also: Eddie Guerrero, Stevie Ray, Val Venis, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards, bonus calendar.

Jan. 1999: Seasons Greetings With A Bang (DDP & Kimbark). Also: Sevener-Shamrock, Konnan, Arn, Undertaker-Kane, Chris Jericho.

Feb. 1999: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For '99! Also: Hogan & Hart, D-Lo, Ken Shamrock, Slaughter-Snow.

March 1999: Estrange Situation! Insider Reveals: "Shane Still Resents His Father!" Also: X-Pac, Hogan-Warrior, Jesse Ventura, Billy Kidman, Scott Norton.

April 1999 (Special Issue): The 1999 INSIDE WRESTLING Computer Tournament. Also: Bossman-McMahon, Steiner & Bischoff, Hollywood Hogan, Wrath, Blue Meanie.

May 1999: Team Corporate's WrestleMania Scare! Mankind's Title Victory Could Have Spoiled Everything! Also: New Age Outlaws, Eddie Guerrero, Triple-H, Bill Goldberg.

June 1999: Still In-Vince-ible! What Will It Take To Topple This Man? Also: Rey Mysterio Jr., ECW, Triple-H, NWO, Blue Meanie.

July 1999 (Special Issue): Top Stars Answer Your Personal Questions. Also: Vince McMahon, Vincent, Eric Bischoff, Giant Baba.

Aug. 1999: WrestleMania XV: The Real Winners And Losers! Also: Vana Dam-Lynn, Saturn, Goldust, Steiner-Bagwell.

Sept. 1999: Shane, Come Back! Can Vince Survive Without His Son? Also: Bret Hart, Rick Rude, Ken Shamrock, Hogan-Flair-Page-Goldberg, Taz-Jerry-Crazy.

Oct. 1999 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Mankind & Shamrock, Snow-Holly, Sting, Edge, Flair-Robinson, AWF.

Nov. 1999: Crash At The Bash! Enter Sid, Visually! Also: Undertaker-Austin, Acolytes, Master P, Debra, Justin Credible.

Dec. 1999: The Rock: What Makes You Love/Hate This Man? Also: Sting, Shane Douglas, Dross, Piper-Bagwell, Taz.

Holiday 1999 (Special Issue): The 1999 Turnbuckle Turkey Awards. Also: Sting, Dogg-Gunn, Undertaker, Steve Corino, 2000 calendar.

Jan. 2000: Dreaming Of An Extreme Christmas (Tommy Dreamer & Francine). Also: Goldberg, Al Snow, Billy Gunn, Doring & Road Kill, cigar-chompers.

Feb. 2000: Wrestling's Top Stars: What's Ahead For 2000! Also: Vince-Bulldog, Mike Awesome, Sid Vicious, Gorilla Monsoon.

March 2000: Kevin Nash & Scott Hall: Getting Inside The Outsiders' Heads. Also: Dudley, Jerry Lynn, Vince-DJ, Kimberly, Zero Gravity.

April 2000 (Special Issue): The Y2K Computer Tournament. Also: Jarrett-Bill, Christopher & Taylor, Lou E. Dangerously, Lawler-Fantastic.

May 2000: Hey, Scott, Watch Your Back! The NWO Is Setting You Up!

Also: Hacksaw Duggan, Ric Flair, Rikishi Phatu, Test, Mike Awesome.

June 2000: Chris Jericho's Deadliest Enemy: His Ego! Also: Tazz, Kidman-Torrie, Nash-Funk, Buff Bagwell, New Jack.

July 2000 (Special Issue): It's True! Kurt Angle Will Be Hotter Than The Rock In Six Months! Also: Elizabeth, Steve Blackman, Norman Smiley, Spike Dudley, personal questions.

Aug. 2000: WrestleMania 2000: The Real Winners & Losers! Also: Dustin-Funk, Eddie Guerrero, ECW extreme, WCW analysis.

Sept. 2000: Those Damn Dudleys! Is There An Evil Act Fans Won't Cheer? Also: Billy Kidman, Taka Michinoku, Yoshihiro Taziki, Jeff Jarrett.

Oct. 2000 (Special Issue): WCW Midyear Report. Also: Kurt Angle, Malenko-Saturn, Lance Storm, Tori, Jumbo Tsuruta, ECW headliners.

Nov. 2000: When Will Triple-H Proclaim ... "I'm Sick Of Being A McMahon!" Also: Trish Stratus, Shane Douglas, Hulk Hogan, Kevin Nash, Yoshihiro Taziki.

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Jan. 2001: Olympic Games: What Kind Of Angle Has Curb Been Running? Also: Tazz-Lawler, Big Vito, Stacy Keibler, Chris Benoit, Kid Kash, Chyna.

March 2001: Who Knows The Rock's Role? Is He Ditching Wrestling For Hollywood? Also: Trish Stratus, Billy Gunn, Jarrett-Sting, C.W. Anderson, Booker T.

May 2001: The WrestleMania Tip Sheet: What You Must Know About The Event Of The Year! Also: Scott Steiner, Dudley, Malenko & Lita, Shane Douglas, Raven.

Aug. 2001: Game Face! We Haven't Seen Hunter's Ugly Side ... But Just Wait! Also: WWF vs. WCW, Kurt Angle, Vince McMahon, Booker T.

Hardy & Lita, Haas brothers, WCW babies.

Oct. 2001: Will Debra Ice Stone-Cold? Also: Vince vs. Shane, Chyna, William Regal, former Big Three stars.

Dec. 2001: The WWF-WCW Dream Matches We Really Want! Also: Tazz, Dudley, Perry Saturn, Johnny Valentine, 100 WCW facts.

Feb. 2002: RVD: The Story You've Been Missing For 10 Years! Also: Hardys, Randy Orton, Shawn Stasiak, Turnbuckle Turkey Awards.

April 2002: Feud Alert! The Lowdown On 2002's Hottest Showdowns! Also: Rikishi, Stacy Keibler, Shane Helms, 2001 report cards.

June 2002: Special Comeback Issue: Triple-H, Chris Benoit, Kevin Nash. Also: Chris Jericho, Howard Stern, hypothetical unification showdows.

Aug. 2002: WrestleMania X8: The Real Winners And Losers! Also: Hulk Hogan, Scott Steiner, Jamie Noble, Jarrett-Christopher, Ali-Japan.

Oct. 2002: Dark Side Be Damned! Undertaker's At His Best As Himself! Also: Ric Flair, Triple-H, Wahoo McDaniel, Goldberg, WCW-Hollywood.

Dec. 2002: The Impossible Dream, Part 2: Can Angle Win Another Olympic Gold? Also: Shane McMahon, PTC-WWE, Trish Stratus, Malice, next best things.

Feb. 2003: HBK's Miracle Comeback: Will The Fans Let Him Make The Smart Choice? Also: Edge, RVD, Chuck & Billy, Russ Haas Memorial, Turnbuckle Turkeys.

April 2004: The Raw vs. Smackdown Super Bowl Party: WWE Will Never Be The Same! Also: Tajiri, Maven, Carly Colon, Raw report cards.

June 2004: Who Can Tame The Beast That Is Batista? Also: Hardcore Holly, Michael Shane, Chavo-Eddie, "McSpanky's" 20th anniversary.

Aug. 2004: WrestleMania Alumni Agree: Randy Orton's Life Is Changed Forever! Also: Eddie Guerrero, Hall & Nash, Chris Benoit, insiders' poll.

April 2003: Big Poppe Pump: On A Dirty Mission To Clean Up WWE. Also: Ron Killings, Big Show, WWE agents, report cards.

June 2003: Grabbing For Greatness: Triple-H's Desperate Quest For Immortality. Also: Abdullah, Shawn Michaels, Chris Benoit, WCW winners & losers.

Aug. 2003: WrestleMania XIX: The Supercard That Changed The Course Of History! Also: René Dupree, The Hurricane, Chris Jericho, Team Angle, injuries.

Oct. 2003: Done? Don't Count On It! Stone-Cold Will Die If He Can't Fight!

Also: Kliq, Miss Elizabeth, D-Lo Brown, FBI, WWE nostalgia.

Dec. 2003: The 10 Most Respectable Wrestlers Who Get No Respect. Also: Dragon vs. Mysterio, Hulk Hogan, Lance Storm, Sting, Lawler vs. Rhodes.

Feb. 2004: The Game vs. Da Man: The Death War That's Too Brutal To Last! Also: Undertaker, Kane-Shane, Shaniqua, Briscoes vs. Briscoes, Turnbuckle Turkeys.

April 2004: The Raw vs. Smackdown Super Bowl Party: WWE Will Never Be The Same! Also: Tajiri, Maven, Carly Colon, Raw report cards.

June 2004: Who Can Tame The Beast That Is Batista? Also: Hardcore Holly, Michael Shane, Chavo-Eddie, "McSpanky's" 20th anniversary.

Aug. 2004: WrestleMania Alumni Agree: Randy Orton's Life Is Changed Forever! Also: Eddie Guerrero, Hall & Nash, Chris Benoit, insiders' poll.

INSIDE WRESTLING

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roll call of champions

For period ended October 28, 2004

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: KENDO KA SHIN & YUJI NAGATA
(June 12, 2004; from Kaz Hayashi & Satoshi Kojima; Nagoya, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: KAZ HAYASHI
(February 22, 2004; beat Taka Michinoku; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN TRIPLE CROWN CHAMPION: TOSHIAKI KAWADA
(September 6, 2003; beat Shinjiro Ohtani in tournament final; Tokyo, Japan)

BORDER CITY WRESTLING CAN-AM HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: D-LO BROWN
(July 18, 2004; beat Gangrel for vacant title; Belleville, MI)

BORDER CITY WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BOBBY RUDE & PETEY WILLIAMS
(September 19, 2004; from Eddie Venom & N8 Mattson; Windsor, Ontario)

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JOHN WALTERS
(May 1, 2004; from Christopher Daniels; Wilmington, DE)

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPION: FRED SAMPSON
(September 18, 2004; from Prince Nana; Newark, DE)

EAST COAST WRESTLING ASSOCIATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE VALEDICTORIANS
(November 8, 2003; from Joey & Johnny Maxx; Wilmington, DE)

HEARTLAND WRESTLING ASSOCIATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RORY FOX
(March 30, 2004; from El Temor; Cincinnati, OH)

HEARTLAND WRESTLING ASSOCIATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
ALI HUSSEIN & QUINTEN LEE
(October 5, 2004; from Crazy J & Lotus; Cincinnati, OH)

IWA MID-SOUTH HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: C.M. PUNK
(October 23, 2004; from A.J. Styles; Highland, IN)

IWA MID-SOUTH LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JIMMY JACOBS
(September 17, 2004; beat Delirious for vacant title; Highland, IN)

IWF American Champion: BIGGIE BIGGS
(April 28, 2004; from Kevin Knight; West Long Branch, NJ)

IWF HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: ROMAN
(January 17, 2004; from Fred Sampson; West Paterson, NJ)

IWF TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: KEVIN KNIGHT & DAN MCGUIRE
(October 23, 2004; from Travis Blake & Shawn Donavan; Middletown, NJ)

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: KENSUKE SASAKI
(October 9, 2004; from Kazuyuki Fujita; Tokyo, Japan)

IWGP INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
MINORU SUZUKI & YOSHIHIRO TAKAYAMA
(February 1, 2004; from Osamu Nishimura & Hiroyoshi Tenzan; Sapporo, Japan)

IWGP JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: HEAT
(December 14, 2003; from Jado; Nagoya, Japan)

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JEFF JARRETT
(June 2, 2004; from Ron Killings; Nashville, TN)

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BOBBY RUDE & ERIC YOUNG
(October 12, 2004; from Christopher Daniels & James Storm; Orlando, FL)

NWA FLORIDA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: STEVE MADISON
(September 4, 2004; from Todd Shane; Clearwater, FL)

NWA FLORIDA TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: MIKEY BATT & JERRELLE CLARK
(September 18, 2004; from Mikey Tenderfoot & Justice; Brandon, FL)

NWA SOUTHWEST TEXAS HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: TEJAS
(April 24, 2004; from Al Jackson; Perry, OK)

NWA SOUTHWEST TEXAS TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BOBBY 2 BADD & HARLEY JOHNSON
(June 19, 2004; from NC-17; Dallas, TX)

OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: CHRIS CAGE
(October 13, 2004; from Matt Morgan; Louisville, KY)

OHIO VALLEY WRESTLING SOUTHERN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
MAC JOHNSON & SETH SKYFIRE
(September 29, 2004; beat Chris Cage & Tank Toland for held-up title; Louisville, KY)

PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN CHAMPION: KENTA KOBASHI
(March 1, 2003; from Mitsuharu Misawa; Tokyo, Japan)

PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
YOSHINOBU KANEMARU
(July 10, 2004; from Jushin Liger; Tokyo, Japan)

PRO WRESTLING NOAH GLOBAL HONORED CROWN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
MITSUHARU MISAWA & YOSHINARI OGAWA
(January 10, 2004; from Yuji Nagata & Hiroshi Tanahashi; Tokyo, Japan)

RING OF HONOR CHAMPION: SAMOA JOE
(March 22, 2003; from Xavier; Philadelphia, PA)

RING OF HONOR PURE WRESTLING CHAMPION: JOHN WALTERS
(August 28, 2004; from Doug Williams; Braintree, MA)

RING OF HONOR TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: RICKY REYES & ROCKY ROMERO
(August 7, 2004; from Colt Cabana & C.M. Punk; Essington, PA)

TNA X CHAMPION: PETEY WILLIAMS
(August 11, 2004; from Frankie Kazarian & Michael Shane in gauntlet match; Nashville, TN)

WWE CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: SPIKE DUDLEY
(July 27, 2004; from Rey Misterio Jr.; Cincinnati, OH)

WWE INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: SHELTON BENJAMIN
(October 19, 2004; from Chris Jericho; Milwaukee, WI)

WWE RAW CHAMPION: TRIPLE-H
(September 12, 2004; from Randy Orton; Portland, OR)

WWE RAW TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHRIS BENOIT & EDGE
(October 19, 2004; from Robert Conway & Sylvan Grenier; Milwaukee, WI)

WWE SMACKDOWN CHAMPION: JOHN BRADSHAW LAYFIELD
(June 27, 2004; from Eddie Guerrero; Norfolk, VA)

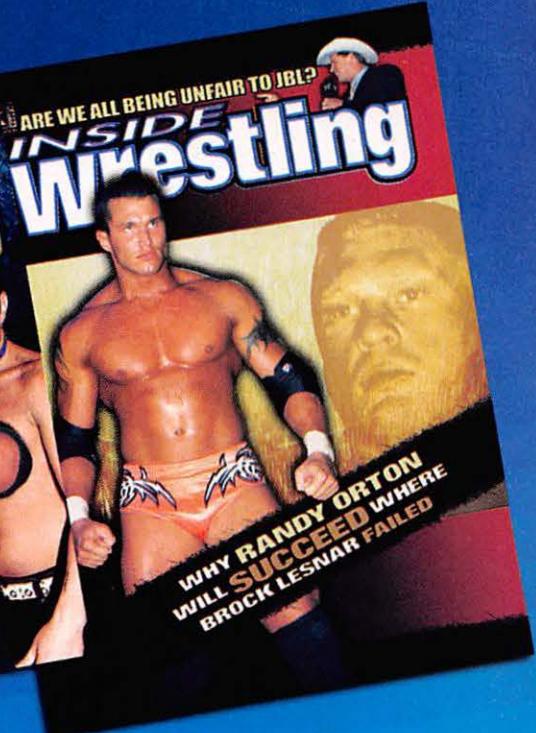
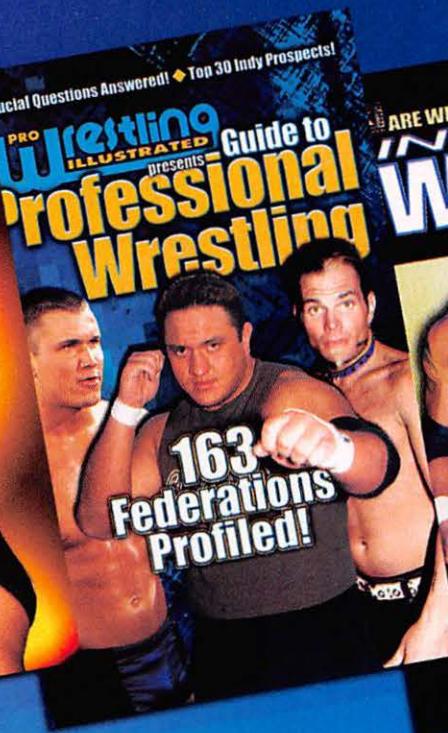
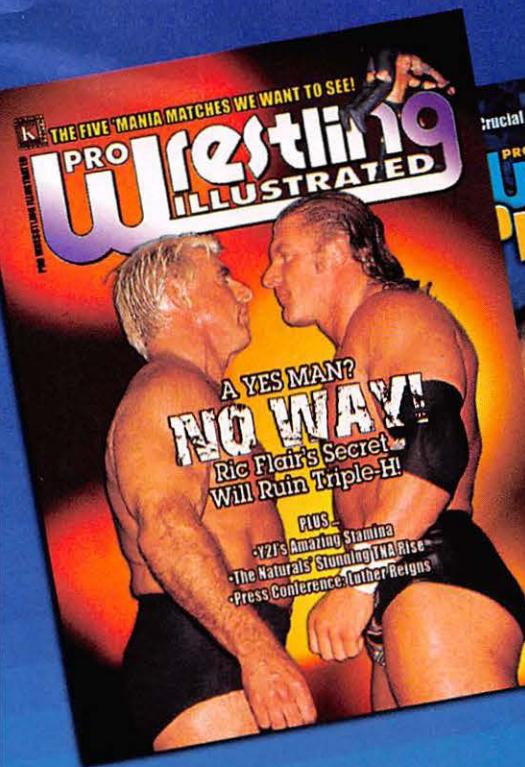
WWE SMACKDOWN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: RENE DUPREE & KENZO SUZUKI
(September 7, 2004; from Billy Kidman & Paul London; Tulsa, OK)

WWE U.S. CHAMPION: CARLITO CARIBBEAN COOL
(October 5, 2004; from John Cena; Boston, MA)

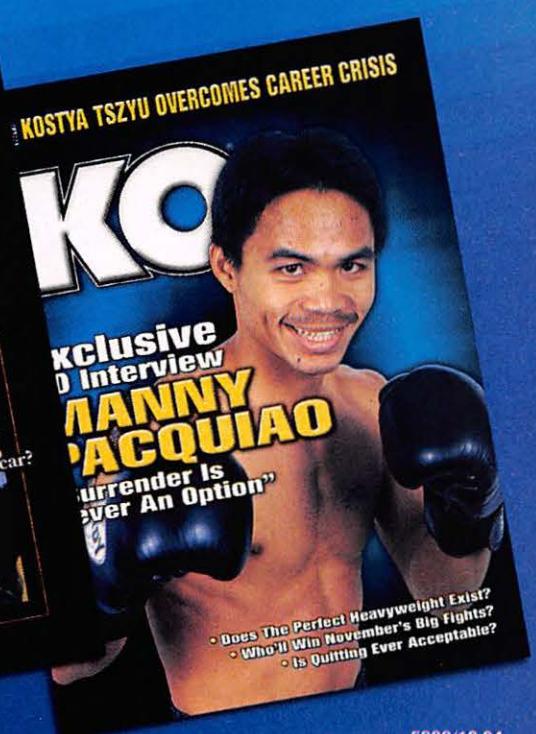
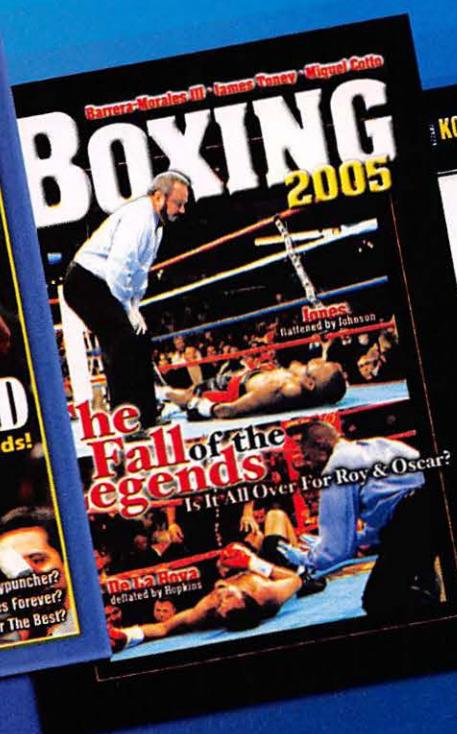
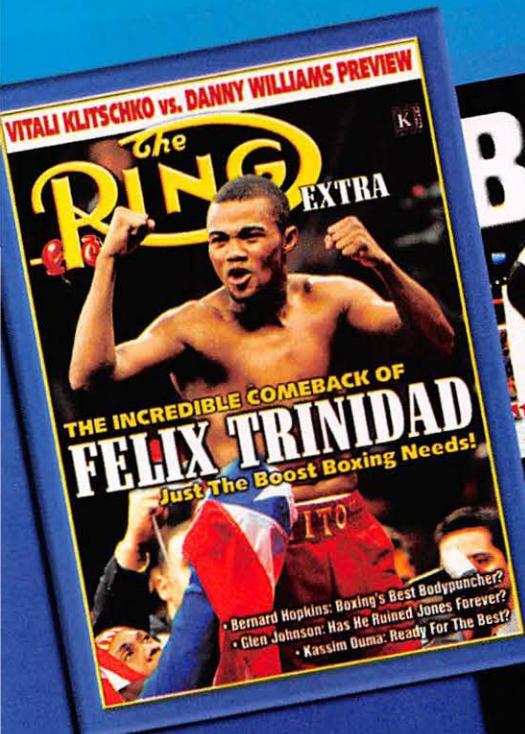
WWE WOMEN'S CHAMPION: TRISH STRATUS
(June 13, 2004; from Victoria in four-way match; Columbus, OH)

WORLD XTREME WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
MANA THE POLYNESIAN WARRIOR
(July 9, 2004; from Rapid Fire Maldonado; Allentown, PA)

WORLD XTREME WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: UTOUCHABLES
(August 28, 2004; from E.C. Negro in handicap match; Sciota, PA)

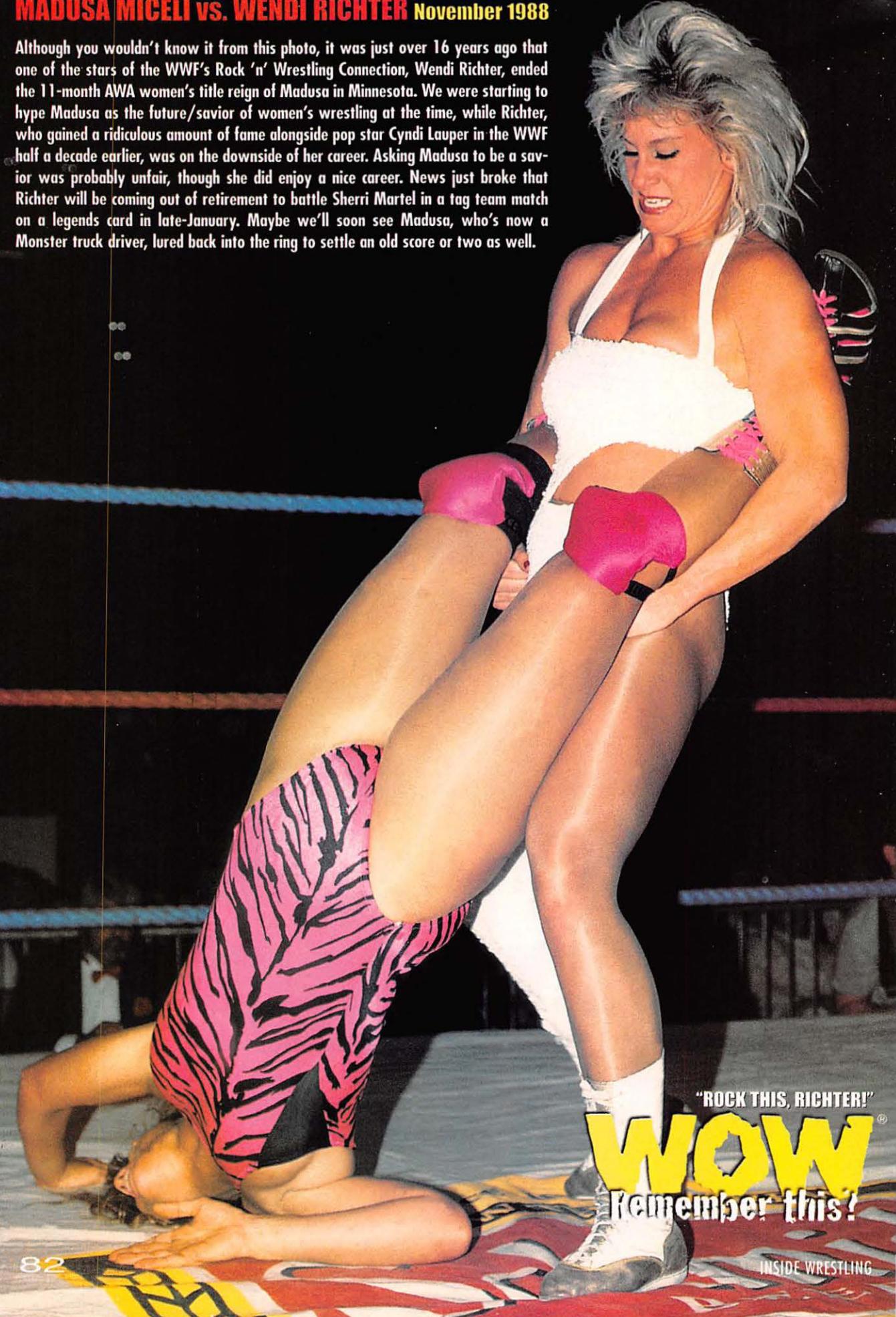


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MADUSA MICELI VS. WENDI RICHTER November 1988

Although you wouldn't know it from this photo, it was just over 16 years ago that one of the stars of the WWF's Rock 'n' Wrestling Connection, Wendi Richter, ended the 11-month AWA women's title reign of Madusa in Minnesota. We were starting to hype Madusa as the future/savior of women's wrestling at the time, while Richter, who gained a ridiculous amount of fame alongside pop star Cyndi Lauper in the WWF half a decade earlier, was on the downside of her career. Asking Madusa to be a savior was probably unfair, though she did enjoy a nice career. News just broke that Richter will be coming out of retirement to battle Sherri Martel in a tag team match on a legends card in late-January. Maybe we'll soon see Madusa, who's now a Monster truck driver, lured back into the ring to settle an old score or two as well.



"ROCK THIS, RICHTER!"

WOW
Remember this!



shelton
BENJAMIN

WWE Intercontinental champion
Photo by Gary Dineen

carlito

CARIBBEAN COOL

WWE U.S. champion

Photo by Gary Dineen

